



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

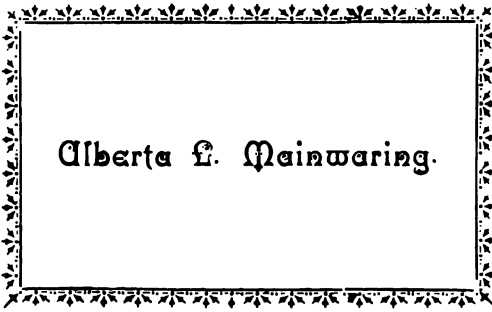
About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>


A BIRTHDAY POESY

FOR YOUNG AND OLD

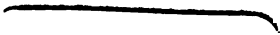


A rectangular decorative border with a repeating floral or leaf pattern surrounds the text.

Alberta F. Meinwaring.



Alberta E. Mainwaring.



1st Edr

Contains 168 pp story.

A BIRTHDAY POSY

For Young and Old.

A
BIRTHDAY POSY

FOR YOUNG AND OLD.

Poems, Songs, Stories, Plays, etc.

BY
AUGUSTA TEMPLE.

LONDON :
J. MASTERS AND CO., 78, NEW BOND STREET.
1889.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY J. MASTERS AND CO.,
ALBION BUILDINGS, S. BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE.

AKS483

DEDICATED

TO

E. T.

HOW CAN I THANK KIND HEAVEN ENOUGH FOR THEE?
HOW CAN WORDS PICTURE ALL THOU ART TO ME?
TO OTHERS ALSO GENIAL, TRUE, AND KIND;
A SUNNY MEMORY THOU WILT LEAVE BEHIND!



CONTENTS.

	PAGE
A BIRTHDAY PRAYER	I
"JUDIE;" OR WRATH AND GRACE. A PARABLE STORY ..	3
BEACON LIGHT	50
BAPTISM	51
VICTOR'S JOURNEY. A PARABLE STORY	53
DREAM SONG	64
BAPTISM OF MY GODCHILD, N. M. G.	65
YOU AND I	67
BABY PRATTLE. L. D. S.	68
THE KNIGHT AND THE MONK	71
GIANT RIGHT AND GIANT WRONG. A PARABLE STORY ..	75
SHADOWS	85
SOFT CAME THE SUMMER BREEZE (<i>with Music</i>)	86
TO MY FRIEND THIRZA	90
TO THE SAME	91
ANCHORED	92
THE ANSWER	93
HOLY COMMUNION	94
LIFE BUT A VAPOUR	95
WRESTLING	97
SELF	98
"THERE"	99

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
LENT	100
SALVATION .. .	101
ELVA'S TASK. A NOVELETTE .. .	102
CINDERELLA. A PLAY FOR LITTLE CHILDREN .. .	271
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. DITTO .. .	278
RED RIDING-HOOD. DITTO .. .	285
FAST AND FEAST .. .	290
HARVEST HYMN .. .	292
"EVER WITH THE LORD" .. .	293
LEICESTER BOUQUET TO W. S. .. .	294
HYMN FOR EVENING (<i>with Music</i>) .. .	296

A BIRTHDAY POSY,

For Young and Old.

A BIRTHDAY PRAYER.

L ORD, now another year comes on,
Oh! let me give it unto Thee;
Dear SAVIOUR, let Thy Blood atone
For all the past has found in me.

That past is with Thee, and with Thee
The life that to me yet remains,
Now speak the word, my future free
From sin and Satan's awful chains.

I would be pure, I would be free,
I would my Master serve in love;
LORD JESUS, be my purity,
And fix my heart and hopes above.

The world would draw my soul from light,
And Satan tempts my spirit down;
The flesh stirs with resistless might,
Unless Thy victory be mine own.

A BIRTHDAY PRAYER.

Oh, give Thyself to me this day,
I plead Thy promise, gracious LORD !
Be Thou my Life, my Truth, my Way,
My Shield, and my Complete Reward.

Thou, FATHER, wast well pleased in One
Who, holy, harmless, undefiled,
Had left His FATHER'S glorious Throne
To make myself " His FATHER'S child."

I plead His love, His life, His death,
I plead His own most saving Name ;
And pray that with my every breath
I prove and plead and praise the same !

“JUDIE;” OR, WRATH AND GRACE.

CHAPTER I.

“**A**UNTIE, we have said our Sunday lessons, now will you *please* tell us one of your parable stories?”

“Auntie” put aside her books, and taking little Ivy on her lap, with a loving kiss on the tiny brow, while Harry and Ethel sat together on the hearth-rug, she began thus:—

Judie was a poor little girl, who lived in a large, dirty court in a manufacturing town. I am sorry to say she was a very naughty girl, but you will soon see that it was not possible for her to be anything else while she was untaught, and uncared for, in the midst of the poor, sinful creatures who lived in Mammon Place.

Judie’s mother had never taken her little daughter in her arms, nor kissed her baby face; she died before that was possible, and so the child had never known what a mother could do to comfort and to help. Her father was a stern, selfish man, who took very little notice of his little girl; and when, some time after her mother’s death, he brought a tall, dark-faced woman home, to be Judie’s step-mother, the neighbours said that “Adam Graves had done a bad thing for himself and his child!”

Judie was seven years old when my story begins, and I can scarcely tell you what she was like then, for her face was so dirty, and her hair fell in such a tangled mass about her neck and thin cheeks, that it would be unfair to judge of her real appearance, under

different treatment. Sometimes, in hot weather, she would run to the rickety old pump in the court, and bathe her face, but it was not much the cleaner for her way of washing it; and under the dark brown hair that fell over her forehead, you could see two large brown eyes, that once or twice in her life had been made to look *very* bright, when at one time some dancing dolls were shown in the court, and once or twice a neighbour had given her an apple or some sweets.

One day there came to the next house to Judie's quite a different looking person from the rest of the people in that benighted neighbourhood. It was a young woman, who actually had a clean face and tidy dress; and when Judie saw her standing at the door, with a neat print apron on, and nursing a baby, who was also free from the smoky appearance common to Mammon Court babies, our little forlorn heroine stood speechlessly gazing at the pleasant picture. She had never heard such loving words and tones as the young mother was uttering in her baby's ear, as it laid its little head on her shoulder, and all at once Judie felt a soft, sweet feeling come over her little heart, and she slid along the wall of the houses, slowly and shyly, nearer the strangers; and when the baby suddenly lifted its head and smiled at Judie, her admiration found words at last.

"That's the beautifullest baby that ever comed here!" she said, standing before the woman; who was so pleased to hear her tiny son praised, that she looked more kindly at the little girl than she had done at first; "and," continued Judie, "I never see any one make so much of a little one as you do; why, you've been and kissed it six times since I came outside!"

"Well, I should think your mother might kiss *you* if you had a cleaner face," said the woman.

"No, she wouldn't," said Judie, "and I don't want her to, that's more."

"What a bad girl!" answered the stranger; "what's your name?"

"Judie."

"*Judie!* What a name, to be sure; what were you christened?"

"What?"

"What were you christened? What is your proper name?"

"Why, ain't Judie a proper name?"

"No, you must have been christened something else."

"*She* never was christened," said a neighbour passing by, "we don't hold with that; though some says as it makes the child thrive better."

Judie was just asking the baby's name, when a very old boot came flying down from an upper window, and fell on the child's shoulders with a smart rap.

"Take that, for gossiping with strange folk, instead of peeling the taters!" said a voice.

Judie looked up angrily to the window, rubbing her poor thin little shoulder as she went slowly into the house. There she went on with her task of peeling the potatoes, and when she heard Bell Graves coming down stairs, her heart beat quicker, and her face grew red with anger and fear, and her small hands trembled till she nearly cut her fingers with the rusty old knife she held.

Her step-mother began to scold her angrily, as she always did when Judie was at all at fault. Bell was more cross than usual this morning, and she was full of hatred against the next neighbour and her quiet ways, which were such a reproach to the general conduct of Mammon Place.

Judie went on with her work quietly, while her step-mother's tongue ran on. She called Judie hard names, and said she was always idle. Now, there was at least one good point in Judie's character, and that was a love of truth, and nothing hurt and vexed her so much as injustice.

When Bell called her "idle," she felt more angry than ever; and she looked at the biggest potatoe in the dish, and longed to throw it

straight and hard at Bell's head ; but she knew that that was more than she dared do ; for the punishment would be too dreadful ! She did not want to cry, for she would rather that her step-mother should think she did not care for her scoldings, but the choking feeling in her throat grew worse as Bell went on, and presently a tear began to roll down her cheek. As she brushed it quickly away with her hand, her elbow struck the edge of the yellow dish, and down it went ; the potatoes all rolling about the floor, and a piece of the dish flew against Bell Graves' foot.

Then Judie stopped crying, and stood at bay, with a very white face and throbbing chest. One instant she thought of flying out of the house, but Bell stood between her and the door.

Then Judie held up the knife, and said, shrilly, "If you come nigh, to touch me, I'll *kill* you, I'll *kill* you!" Her step-mother had a long stick of firewood in her hand, which she was just going to break up, but now she dealt a heavy blow with it upon poor Judie's little red hand, knocking the knife far aside, and then she seized the little girl in her strong, cruel grasp !

The neighbours took little notice of the screams coming from Bell's house, they were accustomed to them, and so no one interfered in behalf of the little victim.

When Bell's fury was somewhat lessened, she flung poor Judie on to the stairs, and shut the door at their foot, saying, "Now then, go up in the attic, and stay there till your father comes home, you little vixen ! and he may just as well give you another thrashing when he knows about your goings on."

The beaten child scrambled up the stairs, to be farther off from the chance of another blow ; and when she got safely into the room above, she flung herself down on the floor, and sobbed and cried piteously ; but her chief feeling was anger, with hatred for her step-mother. Though her poor little body ached and smarted very painfully, and she seemed to have hardly any strength left, still she

longed passionately to be revenged, and repeated, under her breath, "I wish I'd *killed* her, I *wish* I'd killed her!"

Oh, little happy children, in loving homes, how thankful you should be that you are not like poor little Judie! that you are not brought up in ignorance, neglect, and cruelty; like so many other "lost lambs" in this great world of sunshine and shade. If the sunshine is falling on you now, thank GOD for it, and ask Him to help, and teach, and comfort little ones who are in the cold darkness, such as reigned in Mammon Court!

After a while, Judie sat up, and thought to herself, "I don't care; and I don't believe father will beat me; perhaps it will be too late when he comes in for him to bother about it before supper, and perhaps she'll go to the public-house when she's got his supper laid. When I'm a woman I'll pay her out; I won't mind how much *she* screams, either!" Judie went to the old window-seat, and looked out; the court was full of neglected children like herself, and the next door neighbour was in her own house now, singing her baby to sleep. Judie could hear the words:—

"Sleep, my baby dear,
Sleep on thy mother's breast—
God's angels hover near;
Oh, rest, my darling, rest!"

and she listened eagerly, forgetting all her pain and anger, never thinking of Bell's cruelty, until the singing ceased, and then little Judie began to cry again; but they were gentle, quiet tears now.

"I wonder what these words mean!" she thought. "I hear folks talk about *God* sometimes when they're fighting and swearing; I wonder why she sings it to her baby like that! Oh, I wish I was that there little 'un, I do!"

There was an old tin bowl in the window, with some very dirty water in it, and an old pipe lying by. Judie began to amuse herself

by filling the pipe with water, and emptying it out of the window. This was noticed by a boy of nine years old, who was out in the court, playing with the pump-handle, and he came under the window and whispered to Judie,

"Give us that pipe, can't you?"

"When I've done with it," said Judie.

"How long first?" said Tom Laikes.

"When I've used all the water," replied Judie.

"Ain't you had a thrashing?" asked Tom.

"Yes," answered the little girl, "but I don't care; I hate her."

"Why don't you kick her legs?" said Tom. "When any one beats me, I do let 'em have it."

"Ah, but your folks are littler than her," said Judie.

"I'd run away," said Tom, "like Ben Cail's did."

"Where did he run to?" said Judie, earnestly.

"Oh, he went along with a chimley sweep, and he was a fine hand at climbing 'em quick."

"What's the chimley sweeps climbed for?"

"No, the chimleys, you silly."

"Well, *I* couldn't climb well enough; so that's no use."

"Well, there's Ned Binks ran away to sea," said Tom.

"To see what?" asked Judie; "I'd like to run away to see the dancing dolls again!"

"Well, I guess you've had all the sense beaten out of you," said Tom, "or else it's never come. Ned went for a sailor, and saw lots of foreign parts, where lions, and tigers, and helephants grows—I mean lives; but there, you couldn't do that neither; girls ain't no good."

"I wish Ned would take *her*, and leave her along of the lions and tigers," said Judie.

"Well, ain't you done with the pipe yet, Judie?"

"Yes, you may have it," said she. "Hold up your hands."

But Tom held up his ragged cap eagerly, and the pipe fell into it, and off he darted with his prize.

His father was out, and Tom knew it, so he watched his mother go to the pump for water, and then he felt in his father's coat pocket, and found some tobacco there in an old tin case. I am sorry to say that Tom often broke the law in this way when the coat was left hanging at home; but he had been obliged to roll the tobacco in paper, cigarette fashion, until he owned the pipe Judie had given.

Now he ran off, taking some matches on the way, and sat down under a distant archway to enjoy his treasure.

And Judie did not think of the wrong-doing on her part in giving away her father's pipe, knowing he had another in use. She did not expect to suffer for her favour towards Tom.

But, unfortunately, her father came home early that evening, and Judie was called down to join her parents at tea.

She ate her dry crust of bread quickly, and was just on the point of slipping out into the court, when her father said, "Judie, run and fetch my pipe that's upstairs; I broke my best one to-day."

But the child stood still, with a very frightened face.

"Do you hear me?" shouted her father; "you'd best be quick, or I'll make you stare for something!"

Judie ran up stairs, she scarcely knew why, and then she looked out of the window for Tom, in hopes of seeing him near enough to ask for the pipe back again; but he was still absent from the court.

"Aren't you coming?" shouted her father angrily, and poor Judie went trembling to the stairs' top.

"Oh! father, *please* don't beat me!"

"Well, where's the pipe, you little sniveller?"

"I gave it to Tom Laikes; *you* never used it."

Then Bell Graves felt glad that her husband should have cause to be angry with the child she hated, and she told him what had hap-

pened in the morning ; only making Judie's conduct very much worse than it had been ; while the little girl stood above them, biting the hem of her ragged old pinafore.

"Come down !" said her father.

But Judie ran back into the room.

Her father slowly mounted the stairs, and found Judie crouching under the window.

"I'll get it back, I'll get it back !" she cried, while her teeth chattered with fear. "Mother beat me *so* badly this morning, you *might* let me off !"

Even Adam Graves felt a little sorry for her then, but he could not let her go unpunished. He raised her roughly, and with one or two smart blows with his hand, he pushed her towards the stairs, saying, "Go and get it then ; don't show your face without it !"

Judie ran out as fast as her trembling little legs would carry her, but she searched in vain for Tom Laikes ; he had wandered away with some other boys, and no one knew how long he might be before he came back again.

Judie walked out into the streets, and when she thought of the punishment she should get if she returned without the pipe, her heart beat quick with terror. Presently she stopped outside a shop, where all kinds of goods were for sale ; and in the window were many different pipes ; she could see some on the counter also.

There was no one in the shop, and, quick as thought, she darted in, caught up a large brown pipe, and was soon in the street again, and into the crowded court, hiding the pipe under her pinafore. No one had seen the theft, and Judie's heart beat high with excitement and delight.

She ran into the room where her father was sitting, and put the pipe in his hand.

"That's not mine ! Where did you get it ?"

"I stole it," replied the child.

"How?"

"I runned into a shop, where nobody wasn't waitin', and I got it safe."

"Well, you're a sharp youngster!" was all her father said, as he filled the pipe leisurely; "*you* will be of some use, I can see!" he added, after thinking awhile.

"She'd better try her hand at something else besides *pipes*," said his wife; and he nodded his head knowingly.

Judie was told to wash the old yellow tea-cups, and put them on the shelf. Her father went out when his pipe was empty, putting it carefully on the shelf too, and soon afterwards her step-mother bid her be off to bed; but as soon as Bell's tall figure had entered the public-house, at the corner of the court, Judie jumped up from her old straw mattress, and looked out into the little world around her.

She saw the husband of the neat woman next door sitting outside, while his wife talked to him pleasantly. Once Judie heard him say, "Well, my dear, just as *you* like; I don't mind, so long as you and the little 'un' are happy. I know you'll do the best you can for me, too."

This was like a strange language to little Judie, and again she longed for some one to speak gently, lovingly, to her! She felt quite a strange feeling of interest and liking for the strangers, and wished she might live with them, and work for them, instead of staying with her own father and step-mother.

She began to amuse herself with cutting up little pieces of wood, with an old knife, and then she thought again of the morning's suffering and Bell's tales to her father. She did not know it was wrong to think such angry thoughts and feel such a desire for revenge, and so she dwelt longer and longer on the matter, till almost crying again at the recollections, she flung the knife under the grate, saying,

"There! Now you may hunt for it, and I hope you'll not find it either!"

Then she grew sleepy, and tired of watching the people in the

court, and lying down once more, after looking in vain for something to eat, she was soon fast asleep. Poor little Judie! Unbaptized, untaught, unloved! Surely the angels were sorry for thee, though no one on earth showed thee any pity; and surely the GOOD SHEPHERD desires to have thee in His Flock!

"I wonder who can guess the meaning of the parable, so far?" said Auntie.

"I know what it means, but can't say it," said Harold. "It means something about not being baptized."

Auntie began,—"*Born in*"—and Ethel continued,
"*Born in sin, the children of wrath.*"

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning, Bell Graves was not able to get up so early as usual; her head was aching after the late hours she had kept at the public-house the night before, and she spoke in a crosser tone than ever as she bade Judie get up and light the fire, and make her father some tea.

He was then fast asleep, but just as Judie had finished her work, and placed the bread and butter on the old shaky table, he started up and cried out hastily for his breakfast.

When he saw that there was nothing better prepared for him, he began scolding in the loud angry tones that always made poor Judie tremble, although she was so accustomed to such things. "Why don't you get me some meat? I bring home money for you to keep me well fed!" he cried, turning to his wife.

"I told Judie to get your breakfast," she answered sullenly; "but

I don't suppose she likes the trouble of frying the bacon ; she knows well enough where it is."

"There ain't no bacon," said Judie, shrinking back from her father's uplifted hand.

"Then you've done away with it," said Bell. "There *was* a bit, that I know. It's likely you've given *that* to Tom Laikes!"

"If she has!" growled the man, with an oath, as he laid hold of Judie's shaking arm ; but the child cried out,

"I never, *never* touched it! Mother took it to the 'Crown' last night. I *see* her do it. I guess she changes it for drink ; then *you* don't miss the money."

"If ever I knew such a little——"

But Bell did not finish her speech, for her husband cried sternly,

"Now, look you here—I believe the gal's right, and she's as sharp as a needle too. You let me catch you doing this kind o' thing any more, and I'll see who's master!"

While her father breakfasted, Judie took her piece of bread out in the court, and sat down on the ground, wondering if her step-mother would beat her when they were alone, for telling about the bacon ; she wished she had not given such full particulars, but it was too late to mend the matter now.

Presently Tom Laikes came out, and she called him to her.

"I got knocked about for giving you father's pipe, you can just give it back to him now."

"Not I," said Tom ; "besides I sold it to Mike Jones."

"Well, then, I 'spects I'll get another thrashing," said Judie.

"That's your look-out ; you shouldn't have gave me the pipe."

"I didn't think father wanted it," replied the little girl. "Well, may be he won't think about it any more. If he does, I think *you* ought to get the thrashing this time, Tom."

"Tom knows a trick worth two of that," answered the boy ; but as he looked at Judie's poor thin little body and pale cheeks, he couldn't

help feeling uncomfortable in his mind ; but he went away whistling, trying not to think about the chance of her suffering on his account.

Judie looked into the new neighbour's house. "There she is, I declare, a-kissin' that baby again ; and how she do hug it up against her neck ! I guess she wouldn't let any one hurt it, not for anything ; may be she'll thrash it though when it's big enough ; if it knowed what was comin' wouldn't it just like to keep like it is now, not to be growed up like me ?"

She heard her step-mother moving about now, and was just going in doors, to do her usual morning's work, when Bell Graves came to fetch her, giving her a very hard grasp on the shoulder as she pushed her into the house.

Judie was glad to see her father still there, smoking his new pipe. Presently he told his wife to go and get some meat for his dinner, that he might be sure of a better meal at mid-day ; and while Bell was out, and he was talking to a neighbour in the court, Judie went on with her work wearily enough, for she felt tired and weak, wishing her step-mother would never come back, longing to be like Tom Laikes, or the little baby next door.

Her father came in, and scolded her for putting his cap out of sight, under some things on a chair, and when Judie began to explain that he had done it himself, by hastily throwing his jacket over it, he silenced her angrily, and bade her "not try it on too much with that tongue of hers."

Then he went out, and Judie felt that she hated everybody, and her own little life too ; and how she wished she could run away, and hide herself and her fears and sorrows in some loving arms like those that held the baby stranger. She saw the knife which she had thrown into the ashes the night before lying there still, unnoticed in the untidy fireplace, and thinking it wiser to escape further punishment, she took it up, and began her daily task with the potatoes.

She heard Tom's voice at the door, and looking round, she was

delighted to see a tiny black puppy in his arms, nestling contentedly against his breast, as he stroked its thick, softly-coated head.

"Look here," said he, "you may have this for your own if you like, to make up for your thrashings. We have got one too, the others are drowned, and I asked father to let me give this one to you."

Judie took the little doggie in her hands, silently delighting in her treasure.

"It's a month old," said Tom, "and will do nicely if you feed it with milk and bread."

"I don't get milk and bread, Tom, only dry bread; I drink the pump water if I'm thirsty."

"Oh, well you must try and get something for the pup when the old woman's out of the way, if you like to keep it—if not, I'll go and drown it."

"No, no," cried Judie, "I'll hide something away for it when I can, I do just like it; and it's all my own, Tom?"

"Yes, it's yourn I tell you. Ours is called 'Punch;' it would be fine if you called yourn 'Judie,' and then we'll make 'em fight some day, like 'Punch and Judy,' you know."

"I'll not let mine fight, Tom, I'll make it be quiet and peaceable like. I wish folks would be quiet too!"

Tom went away, and Judie nursed the puppy tenderly, so glad to feel it nestling to her; so happy, for a little time, as she knew she had something to love and cherish, though no one loved or cared for her.

Presently she saw her step-mother coming across the court with the purchased dinner in her hand; the potatoes were not ready for boiling, the fire was nearly out, and what would Bell say to all this, and the new lodger too? It suddenly struck Judie, "What will she say to the puppy?" Quickly she caught up an old cloth, and laid the puppy on it at her feet, while she went on hurriedly with her work, wishing the fire would only look a little brighter before Bell

came in ; but it would not, and so she was greeted, as usual, with angry words.

She wondered if the puppy were lying still, but did not dare to look under the table, for fear of drawing her step-mother's attention to it. Presently the little creature gave a tiny squeak of discomfort, missing the warm shelter of Judie's arm, but Bell did not seem to hear it, and the little girl was in an agony of hope and fear.

Then came a louder squeak, and Bell looked up from the fire, and then on to the ground at her feet. The puppy was creeping near her, and Judie watched it in silence and alarm.

"Where did that little brute come from?" cried the woman, angrily.

"Tom gave it to me, it's my own," said Judie, and she was horrified to see a cruel look on Bell's face as she took the puppy roughly into her hand. All Judie's fiery temper rose at the thought of her doggie being ill-treated, and she sprang to Bell's side.

"You let my puppy alone!" she gasped out.

But Bell pushed her aside, and stepped to the door, saying, "It's likely I'll be bothered with *your* rubbish!" Then she flung the helpless animal out into the court, and just as it fell with a dull sound upon the earth, a costermonger's cart came by the spot, and Judie's poor little namesake was killed instantly.

Bell walked back to the fire, Judie glared at her for an instant, longing wildly for revenge; it flashed through her mind that she would kick her, as Tom did his mother, but an instant after she remembered that her poor little bare feet could do no harm.

There was a thick wooden stool close by, and Judie lifted it suddenly, and flung it hard at Bell's legs, then she dashed out of the door, screaming, "I'll run away, I'll run away! I'll never come back!"

But she was caught hold of by her father as he came into the house, and held firmly, as he asked what was the matter.

Bell told him her own version of the story, while the child kept on wildly crying, "I'll run away!"

"Be quiet, will you?" said her father.

"No!" said Judie passionately, "I don't care what you do to me, I wish I was dead like my puppy; I *will* run away when I gets the first chance!"

Bell was looking at her wounded ankle, storming at Judie's "vixenish ways," as she called them, but her husband did not take much notice of her; he was thinking that Judie might keep her word; it was more than likely she would, and he felt it would be contrary to his comfort if the child disappeared. He shut the house door, and bolted it, then turned to his wife, saying,

"You're not much hurt, so leave off that noise, and listen to me! If you *let* the gal run away, you will have to answer to me for it, and I guess it will be the worst account you've had to give yet!"

There was a look in her husband's face that Bell was afraid of; he was the only one on earth, or in Heaven either, that she feared or liked ever so little, and now she felt his power over her.

"I don't see how I can help her doing it," she said, "and she's no great use to you, neither."

"Yes, she is, and she will be more use in time, and I tell you, anyway, she's to be kept at home."

"Well, ain't you goin' to thrash her for hurtin' me in this way?" asked Bell; "or is she to throw things at me as she likes?"

"No," said he, taking up a stick of wood, and giving the little girl some sharp blows with it; then he put her aside, and looked out into the court, while Judie cried bitterly in a corner. Her shoulders were smarting painfully, and she was trembling with fear and anger; sorrowing too for the death of the little creature she had hoped to make her pride and delight; for never before had she owned a treasure,—all her own too!

It was the first present Judie had ever welcomed,—beyond a few sweets, lasting only for a short time,—and little ones who know the

delight of unexpected gifts, or even looked-for birthday and home-coming presents, can understand something of the little forlorn child's pleasure in receiving a living pet and plaything.

Her step-mother began a stricter treatment now with the little girl. Every day Judie was made to do most of the work required in the disorderly house, and whenever her step-mother went out, she locked the child up in the attic ; telling her father that it was only in this way that she could prevent her running away. Sometimes Bell would be away for hours, and Judie was left alone, cold and miserable, in the dreary room, with only an old straw bed on the floor, nothing else in the way of furniture ; and there was nothing for Judie to do but to sit crying on the floor, or look out of the window at happier children who, at least, enjoyed some liberty.

A new trouble came into her life one day. She had been locked up nearly all the afternoon, while Bell was out in the streets singing, as she sometimes did, and earning a few coppers from those who listened to her tale of want and sorrow. She had once or twice taken Judie with her, until a lady had inquired about the "poor little children starving at home," according to Bell's account, and Judie had told her that there were "no little 'uns at home ;" for which Bell gave her a beating afterwards, and never took her with her again.

Well, on this afternoon, when Judie was alone in the attic, she was sitting on the floor, twisting a piece of straw on her fingers, tired of looking at the children outside, whom she could not join, when she heard a scuffling noise in the wall of the room, the other side of the straw bed. Then followed a squeak, and Judie thought of her puppy, but instantly remembered that it could not be another such treasure in such a place.

Presently there came another squeak, and then several tiny little cries joined in. Judie looked wonderingly and fearfully at the wall. There was a hole in the wainscot, even with the floor, and there she

could see two black shining eyes, like jet beads, staring out into the room, and then a large rat put its head out of the hole for a moment, and then drew it back again.

Now Judie was more frightened of rats than of anything in the world. When she was only six years old, one had jumped out suddenly from a corner where she was feeling after a truant potatoe, and a neighbour, who was in the house at the time, exclaimed that it was a wonder the animal had not flown in her face, as rats did sometimes when hard pressed ; and then she had given accounts of their evil deeds and dangerous bites ; and, what with the sudden fright and fearful tales following, poor Judie's nerves had never recovered their powers of balance, so far as rats were concerned ; and now, in the dusk and stillness of the room, Judie sat terror-stricken at the sight.

She did not seem to have the power to move or speak ; her one thought was that the rat might return, and perhaps make an attack at once. She had been so long perfectly quiet this afternoon, and was still so noiseless, that the old rat evidently thought the attic was free from human intruders, and just as Judie was thinking of screaming for help, the scuffling noise returned, and the rat this time came right into the room, followed by three of her children.

Poor Judie sat quaking with fear, and afraid of making any movement to attract the notice of her visitor, for she expected nothing but a sudden dart at her face : she saw the black eyes turned on her for a moment, and she shut her own, with a vague feeling that the rat might not feel so savage towards her if asleep ; and when she opened them again for a minute, in anxious curiosity, to see if she were unnoticed, the animals had disappeared. Where had they gone to ? She looked at the old straw bed, wondering if they had crept into one of the many holes in the torn cover, or whether they were stealing round to her, close to the dark wainscot ; it was quite dusk, and she shivered with dread.

Then she thought she would gather herself up on the window-seat, a safer position than the floor, and very quietly she did so, looking by turns out of the dirty window panes, and then watching the dusky floor, in dreadful fear of seeing a large rat at her feet. She longed to feel sure that they had returned to the wall, and then—if she only had something to put against the hole; but there was nothing but the heavy bed, which she could not move; even the old tin bowl had been taken away from the window-seat.

Presently Tom Laikes came opposite the window. He noticed how very white and frightened Judie's little face looked, and he came close to the wall, and said loudly enough for her to hear him, "What's the matter?"

Judie felt braver at the thought of some one near. She put her mouth to a broken pane of the window, and almost whispered, "Rats!"

Tom burst out laughing, and then said, "Open the window." Judie gave one more look round the room, and then, in desperation, she pushed open the window, feeling ready to throw herself out if the rat appeared, in sudden rage at the noise.

Then she told Tom of her danger, but he laughed again, saying, "You *are* a silly coward."

"But, Tom, rats *do* fly at folks; and they bites awful."

"Well," said Tom, in a superior tone of voice, "I knows they do when they can't get away; and to be sure, you ain't old enough to know the difference in their ways,—you *looks* a bigger baby than you *are*, too. I once heard of a rat flyin' at a man's throat, and never leavin' go neither, till they choked it."

"Oh, Tom!" said Judie, looking hastily round the room again, but no rats appeared.

"But he was stoopin' over a barrel of meal, and the rat couldn't get out easily, you see; but there's no fear of *you* dippin' into a barrel of meal, Judie."

"I never won't, Tom," replied she, "I'd be afraid of the rats a-flyin' at *my* throat;" and again she looked round the darkening room.

"Well, I've heard, too, about their runnin' over folks when they're asleep," said Tom.

"Oh, *don't* tell me about 'em," cried Judie. "Tom, do you think I could get out o' this window?"

"No, not without breakin' your neck—I couldn't."

"S'pose the rats fly at me, Tom? I think I'd as soon be hurt one way as t'other."

"The rats won't come as long as you keeps movin', or makin' a noise," said Tom.

"Here's father comin' home to tea," said Judie; "and *she'll* be soon after him when she sees him passin'. There she comes."

Tom walked off, and Judie began shuffling her feet noisily against the wall as she sat in the window-seat, glad to be certain, according to Tom's statement, of no rat company. She was afraid to leave off, though she grew tired of the movement, while her parents were talking to a man outside the house; then she thought of clapping her hands, and as soon as her father entered the room below, she ran to the top of the stairs, waiting for orders to descend.

Bell Graves told her husband fresh tales of Judie's naughtiness every day, and declared that nothing but locking her up prevented her escape. When he questioned Judie as to her intention of running away, she was silent for a while, and he understood this as a determination to keep her word.

Poor Judie was half-inclined to promise not to try an escape if they would only allow her to quit the fearful attic, but she was very obstinate when once her mind had been made up, and in her little mind there was a great determination to get free from all the cruel trials of Mammon Court.

Bell was really hoping that Judie would fall ill and die; every day she felt a greater hatred for the little girl, and every day Judie's food

was scantier, or quite distasteful to her appetite, which was never good. The want of air and exercise made the poor little face get thinner and paler, but her father did not notice it, and he did not know how much she suffered in his absence.

One day, Tom Laikes came under the window again, and asked Judie if the rats came into the room now.

"Yes," said Judie. "Sometimes I gets tired of makin' a noise, and sometimes I gets sleepy, and then I sees 'em again, and has to go on stumpin' my feet, or clappin'."

"I tell you what," said Tom. "If I brings our cat over, I believe she'd have 'em very soon."

"She'll only get killed, Tom, like the puppy."

Tom thought a minute, and then replied, "You might try her for a while, when you're sure folks is out for an hour, and if she catches the rat, or if it is time for her to be out o' the way, you can just drop her out, and I'll catch her in the old basket. I believe she could jump all the way without any harm; cats always comes on their feet."

"How will I get her up here, Tom?"

"I'll manage that. Are you sure your father and mother are safe out of the house?"

"Yes, they're sure to stay out till tea-time."

Tom ran back to his own house, and came back with a small cat in an old basket, holding her down with one hand. Then he stopped and looked puzzled.

"Wait a bit!" he said, and Judie wondered as he ran back with the cat in his arms, and shut her in his own house, his mother taking no notice of his doings; she was too busy with trying to patch up an old gown to take heed of Tom's many strange doings.

He went back to Judie, and threw up an old line he had taken from the house, telling her to catch hold of it, which she did, after he had once or twice thrown it almost into her hands. Then he tied the other end to the basket, and ran back for the cat, which he placed

therein, saying, "When I tell '*three*,' just draw up the line,—quick now! One, two, three!"

Judie snatched the line with a jerk; over went the basket, and puss ran off across the court.

Tom gave chase, nearly treading on her as she was suddenly crouching in fear, not knowing which way to run. Some other boys came to join in the sport, but Tom persuaded them to look on only.

Then he took the cat back again, and this time he held her till Judie had begun to draw the line up, and while poor puss was thinking of a spring, she was landed safely through the window.

Tom advised Judie to be quite quiet, and watch for the rats while he waited outside; but the cat crept about the room, and no rats appeared.

After a while, Judie held puss in her arms, stroking her as she purred contentedly; and when she heard a slight noise in the wall, her heart beat fast.

Puss was a good mouser, and when she heard the noise, she jumped down quietly, and stole across the room: Judie was trembling with excitement.

Tom whistled outside, which was a sign that the cat must be returned, but Judie was too much in earnest for the rats' capture to interfere; she held up her finger, not turning her head.

A rat's head appeared, and then the body; but puss was taken by surprise, and after looking for a moment at its enemy,—which was also glaring fiercely back, with its white teeth glistening in the dusky light, and not venturing back to the hole so close to puss,—she retired slowly towards the window, with her back rounded, sputtering angrily at her enemy. It was too much for her courage.

This increased Judie's terror and dread of rats, and she began kicking the wall madly, while the cause of her fear instantly withdrew to the wall.

"Oh, Tom! she's afeard of him, just like me!"

"Toss her out," cried Tom, "they'll soon be here!"

Just as he spoke, Adam Graves appeared, and saw Tom holding up the basket to the window. He remembered the words Bell had said about Judie giving Tom the bacon, and angry suspicion filled his mind. Without stopping to consider that his little girl could not possibly have anything to give away, now that she was never unwatched when downstairs, he came behind Tom, while Judie was in the act of raising the cat from the floor, and hit him a hard blow on the head, knocking him down on the ground; while a shout of laughter arose from the boys in the court, who were amused at Tom being so suddenly detected.

Judie appeared now at the window, holding up the cat to view, and then she met her father's angry glance, and saw Tom just rising from the ground, clenching his fists, and nodding his head defiantly at his foe.

"You young thief!" cried the man, "I'll soon make you give up your fightin'! What were you a-gettin'?"

"Only my mother's cat!" cried Tom fiercely, but not inclined to venture on an attack.

"How come she up there?" cried the man.

"She's a-catchin' rats," said Tom, "I sent her up; and you've no cause to hit me, nor shan't do it neither!"

"Serve you right for interferin'," answered Adam; "it's likely I'll put up with your impudence; so clear off now, or you'll get it again."

Judie heard her father come in, and unlock the stairs door; then he called her to come down.

She obeyed, trembling; the cat followed her, and she was relieved to find her father sitting down, allowing the animal to escape quietly; then he shook his fist at the child, and told her that he would make her suffer for it if ever he found her talking to Tom Laikes any more, and Bell came in just in time to enjoy hearing the threat, while the child began to get the tea ready; and Bell found fault with

all she did, and declared she had washed away some of the butter that morning. Then Adam grew angry with both, blaming Bell for trusting the child with the food, and scolding Judie for her supposed carelessness; and so the strife went on, Judie's tears falling on her dry crust as she took her sorrowful meal.

CHAPTER III.

DAY after day was the same to little Judie; the same in weary, sorrowful work, and lonely idleness, each in its turn, according to whether Bell Graves was at home or not. The rats were getting quite accustomed to the child in the attic, but she was just as much frightened of them every time they appeared; always expecting that they would attack her in the dusky, uncertain light of the wintry afternoons, while Bell was away singing or gossiping. Every morning the child woke to labour and fear, and still she longed for escape, in vain.

But it came at last. Tom Laikes noticed her pale little face, looking mournfully through the window pane, each day; the window was nailed up tightly now, and so they never spoke; but he determined to help her to get free. He suddenly remembered that the rooms on the other side of those rented by Adam Graves were now empty, and also that a doorway led into both staircases, close to the attic. He would get into the back rooms, and try the middle door.

He was delighted to find the lower entrance free and open at the back of the houses; a woman had just been in to inspect the rooms, and the door was still unlocked. Tom crept up the stairs, thinking of several excuses he could make if detected there; the middle door

was also unlocked, and very soon he stood outside Judie's attic. He reached up to the latch and lifted it, but the door would not move, and the key was gone; he called in a low tone to Judie, and told her of his attempted rescue, and bade her be ready for flight if he should succeed. "Don't be frightened, Judie; I'm goin' to give the door a regular hard kick."

The shaky old door gave way as the rusty latch fell off at Tom's vigorous attack, and the children stood facing each other with excited looks.

"Now run, Judie, run!" cried Tom breathlessly, and he led the way through the other house, while Judie followed,—fear and delight, by turns, filling her mind.

When they reached the street, Tom sped homewards, telling the little girl again to run quickly away.

She sped up the street as fast as her trembling legs would carry her, and soon found herself in a broad thoroughfare, the pavements crowded with people. Judie ran on, not thinking where she was going, and suddenly she heard a woman's voice singing dismally on the other side of the way. In an instant Judie saw that it was Bell herself, and their eyes met, but there were several carts and other vehicles passing, and before Bell could cross the street, Judie was far up the opposite side, and then she turned up a side way, breathless and panting. Another corner was soon gained, and the terrified child sped on, fear giving her new strength. Once a boy caught hold of her dress, and thought to stop her, but the ragged frock gave way, and Judie was still free. She turned the next corner, and found herself again in a broad, handsome street, but her breath came in thick sobs, and her strength was failing fast. With a stifled gasp, she fell on the stone pavement, just outside the railings round a large building, and little Judie lay quite still and helpless, at the feet of a woman, who was coming out of the doorway.

She raised the child tenderly in her arms, and carried her into the

house. A gentleman came forward, and looked pitifully at the unconscious child ; then taking her from the woman, he said, " Poor little one ! We will do all we can for her."

Judie was bathed and dressed in clean fresh clothes, and what a change there was in the once dirty ragged little girl ! Tom would not have known her as she lay wondering but quiet on a little white bed, with her dark hair put neatly back, and her little face so clean and content.

The kind gentleman had asked Judie's name, and when he heard it, he said smiling, " We will baptize you, and will call you Judith," and Judie felt glad to have a new form to her name, now everything had changed so pleasantly. She was kept very quiet for a few days ; she was weak and tired after the sufferings and want of good food in her old home. Her new friends would come and talk to her at times, telling her the strange story of free love and care which had been the means of saving her from want and ruin.

This is what they told little Judith :—

A very rich Nobleman had been grieved at all the sorrow and sufferings in the world, and had resolved upon this remedy. He had built the large house of refuge where Judith now was, and furnished it with everything needful and pleasant. Then He appointed governors, and teachers, and servants to gather in and care for poor and ignorant children, who could thus be taught and fed, safe from all evil. But there were strict rules to be observed, work to be done, and loving-kindness to be practised among all.

The good Nobleman had also set up other branches of the same kind, with the same rules, in other parts of the country, and He was now absent in another part of His domains, promising to come back again one day, bringing rewards for all faithful work. And all His true servants were longing to see Him, and loved to read His letters and hear His messages.

When Judith was able to join the other children, she felt shy and

strange for a while. She felt happiest when she was with the gentleman who received her into the house, for he would talk to her gently and very earnestly about the noble Friend who had been so good to all, and who would some day take them to a very fair land far away, to be always with Himself, and little Judith would listen eagerly, and promise to try hard to be obedient, and gentle, and true. But soon she found that all was not quite bright and smooth in her new life. When she knew the children a little better, she found some of them very hasty, and sometimes inclined to be quarrelsome. Some of them also made fun of her ignorance and mistakes in the schoolroom. Mr. Shepherd, her chief friend, had warned her of these things, but still Judith found them very trying to her sensitive and impetuous nature. Her love of justice was sometimes sorely wounded by a girl, who was only a few years older than herself, but who was entrusted with the care of the youngest children in play hours. This girl was rather fond of showing her power and authority, and at times she went beyond her proper limit,—interfering, ordering, and scolding Judith and others who were not exactly under her control. Another trial came in the shape of mockery and bitter remarks from a girl two years older than Judith, called Ellen Envie, who was always afraid that others should be better thought of than herself. She had once or twice noticed Mr. Shepherd talking to Judith; he had sometimes failed to notice Ellen as she passed them, and she felt jealous of Judith's happy face and earnest eyes as she listened to him; but then Mr. Shepherd was always ready to help and instruct any who came to him, so Ellen needed no excuse for not doing so as well as Judith, who found it very hard to bear patiently the scornful remarks which Ellen often made about "seeking favour," "pretending to be so good," &c. &c. Judith's cheeks would burn hotly, and her large brown eyes flash brightly, as she indignantly denied the charges, and Ellen would only shrug her shoulders and turn away, leaving Judith to struggle with her anger and pride, forcing back the tears that

would rise; and she would long so earnestly for the lowly, patient spirit, which she had heard was fitting and needful for the children of that Nobleman's household, for she knew that He was kind and patient always, and she must try to grow like Him,—but how difficult it seemed!

She found some of the lessons very hard to learn; she thought that if she could understand them better, the difficulty would not be so great; but there was so much to be learned by heart that her poor little head could not grasp, and Judith always wanted to know the reason of things. Mr. Shepherd had told her to go on bravely still, content to wait patiently for the time when she might see all things clearly; for it was not possible to explain everything to each and all of the children, the meanings and the reasons would come to them one day, and they must strive meanwhile to understand and learn all that might be given them, hoping always for the day when the master should come back with His own smile of approval and love, and all sorrows and difficulties should vanish away.

Judith could not bear to think of her old life in Mammon Court. A dreadful fear came over her whenever she did so,—a fear lest Bell should find her and take her back to the misery and want which now seemed like a terrible dream. She wondered if her father was very angry at her escape. He did not love her, Judith knew that, but she also knew that he expected her to be useful to him in the same way that other children were to their parents in Mammon Court, and now a feeling of horror seized her when she pictured the life of sin and wretchedness that might have been hers, and that instead of listening to Mr. Shepherd's pure and gentle words, she would have had to learn how to steal and lie cunningly. It was the certainty of this danger which made her new friends keep Judith under their care. Once Mr. Shepherd had told her that she might possibly return to Mammon Court some day, and try to win the parents to do right, but the child had shivered with fear, and cried out in such a piteous

manner, begging him to let her stay with him always, that he had not mentioned it again.

Judith had been going on very well for some days, learning her lessons steadily, and trying not to mind Ellen's unkind words and looks, when one snowy afternoon, the children all being in the house, amusing themselves in the usual play hour, a little girl told Judith that she had "found out such a good sliding place in doors."

Judith ran eagerly to enjoy the fun, and the two little girls were thoroughly enjoying themselves, sliding up and down a smooth part of the boarded schoolroom, where the flooring was quite shiny from some former experiments. Two or three other children were sitting there with books or fancy work, and Ellen was among them. After a little while she looked up and bid the two playmates be quiet, as they disturbed her; but the sharp tone and needless interference made Judith's old angry spirit rise again, and she told Ellen that as they were making no noise, they could not be disturbing anybody.

Ellen left the room, and soon returned with the girl I have mentioned before, Judith's other cause of vexation.

Fanny Power came forward quickly, and seized Judith's shoulder, bidding her sharply "sit down and be quiet."

Judith rebelled angrily, saying she was doing no harm, Fanny insisted again, and then declared she should go and complain to Mr. Shepherd, and as she left the room for the purpose, Judith ran after her, passed her on the stairs, and fled quickly to Mr. Shepherd's door. He said "Come in" at once, in answer to her hurried knock, and looked very much surprised to see the little girl's flushed and excited face as she came towards him, speaking eagerly of Fanny Power being unkind and unfair; but before he could understand what she was saying, Fanny entered, and said quickly,

"Judith has been disturbing the others, sir, and will not leave off when we ask her."

"They didn't *ask*," said Judith; "they are disagreeable things, and

it isn't fair to stop us in play hours !" Then she looked at Mr. Shepherd, and saw his kind face looking grieved and perplexed for a moment ; then she burst into tears, and hid her face in her pinafore.

"Tell me all about it," he said to Fanny, and she related how Ellen had complained to her, and how the matter had ended in the school-room.

Then he turned to Judith, and said gently, "The schoolroom is not exactly the place for sliding, and at any rate you are the youngest, Judith, and should have given way. Now you must beg Fanny's pardon for calling her 'disagreeable' and 'unfair,' and then I hope you will be good friends again."

Then he turned to Fanny, and said gravely, "For the future, you had better apply to one of the teachers, or to me, when the children, not under your special care, need correcting."

There was silence for some time, except that Judith's sobs were sometimes audible : when she had grown calm again, Mr. Shepherd went to her and said cheerfully, "Now, little Judith, let us see your face looking happy once more ; you have only to tell Fanny you are sorry for calling her disagreeable and unfair, and she will, I hope, make friends directly."

"But I'm *not* sorry," cried Judith, sobbing again. "I think she's *always* disagreeable, and very often unfair."

Fanny looked pleased, rather than otherwise, to think that Mr. Shepherd heard for himself how Judith could speak when she was angry.

He looked sadly at the child for a few moments, and then he said, "Fanny, you can go for the present ; I will send for you when I want you."

After she had left the room a few minutes, he continued watching Judith struggling with her sobs, then he turned away and looked out of the window. Judith wondered what he was doing so silently, and ventured to peep out from behind her pinafore ; he was looking up

into the sky with a very earnest expression on his face. Judith could not help wondering why he looked like that, and if he had forgotten her. Presently he turned to her and said, "Come to me, Judith."

His voice was very quiet, and Judith felt ashamed and shy as she obeyed him, not crying any more now that she was alone in his calm presence; she wondered if he would punish her, and how. She stood by his side as he sat down near the table, with his eyes again turned to the window, and she listened while he spoke to her very gravely about her giving way to her hasty feelings of anger and pride, and he added,

"Your temper is your great enemy, Judith, and you must conquer *it*, or it will conquer *you*. Do you think it is brave or noble to allow it to make you unworthy of the Master's love? When He comes back again, will you tell Him that your hasty temper would not let you serve and please Him? or shall He smile on His little soldier, and say, 'Well done!' Think, Judith: when He was here, He had constantly to bear unkindness and injustice; all His good works were evil spoken of; people were always 'unfair' to Him. For all His love and all His pity He received anger and hatred; and yet how patient He was! Will you grieve Him still? for He knows all that passes here; and must I punish you for disobedience, or shall I call Fanny back again?"

Judith stood a moment twisting the corner of her pinafore, then she said quickly, "Call Fanny, please."

Mr. Shepherd looked up to the sky once more with a bright look on his face, then he stepped to the door and called Fanny. Judith waited in the middle of the room, with her hands tightly grasping the corner of her pinafore, and her little lips drawn very closely together. When Fanny appeared with a look of triumph, Judith turned quite pale for a moment, and seemed struggling with her breath, but then she went up to the elder girl, and said slowly and distinctly,

"I am sorry I was so cross, and called you names;" and then

before Fanny could speak, the child had run past her, and was out of sight in a moment. She soon reached her own bedroom, where Ellen and another child also slept. There was no one there now, and little Judith fell on her knees by the bedside, and sobbed out whisperingly,

"Oh, LORD JESUS, I am a bad, wicked little girl. Please help me, oh, please help me to be good." She knelt on, crying bitterly for a while ; then she rose, and took a little book of simple devotions from her drawer, and putting it on the bed, knelt again. But her head ached, and her eyes were so burning from hot tears, that she closed them soon, and tried to think about the Master's patient love. Then she thought she could see His face looking at her, it was full of pity and love, and she did not know that she had fallen into a kind of doze, till some one burst into the room.

Judith sprang to her feet, and saw Ellen standing by the door, with her mouth and eyes wide open. She looked at Judith, then at her book, and at last burst out laughing.

"Well, I never !" she cried, "pretending to say your prayers in the middle of the day. You little hypocrite ! You were asleep, I know, for I saw your eyes shut, and your head lying on one side ; and when you are pretending to be so extra good, you might keep the rules, and not spend the play-time in the bedroom."

While Ellen was speaking, Judith had turned away to put the book in its place again, and now she stood holding her hand over her mouth, while an inward voice kept crying, "Help me, *please* help me." As soon as Ellen ceased speaking, they both heard a voice at the door, saying gravely,

"Ellen Envie, come with me to my room."

Ellen started and flushed scarlet, for it was Mr. Shepherd who was standing at the door. He was passing just as Ellen began her mocking remarks ; she had not heard him coming from a side passage as she reached the door.

Judith felt so glad that he should not have heard her make the

angry reply which generally followed Ellen's unkind speeches; so glad that the help she had asked for had been given at once; and her heart felt full of thankfulness. Then she wondered if Ellen would tell all the other girls about her discovery, but she remembered that Mr. Shepherd would surely talk to her so seriously about her unkindness, that Ellen would most likely say nothing to any one else. Judith looked out of the window: the clouds were breaking, and the sun faintly shining through them, and she watched the light spread slowly over the view of housetops. A little girl was carrying a jug very carefully along the pavement of a side street, and just as she stopped outside a door, a woman came suddenly from the inside, and knocking the child's arm as she passed, sent the jug and its contents into the narrow street. Then the woman turned upon the child, and with many blows drove her into the house. Judith felt so indignant, and so anxious to know the history of the little girl, that she forgot her own troubles of the morning. The little girl's misfortune reminded her of her own trials in Mammon Court, and of Bell's ill-usage towards her; and thinking of this, she felt how grateful she should be for the new home and new life given to her.

"I will try to be a better girl," thought Judith; "I have been crosser here than I was in the court, I do believe—what a shame it is!"

The dinner bell rang, and she went down stairs; on entering the dining-room, Ellen Envie whispered, "Mr. Shepherd says I am to beg your pardon: if not, I expect I'd get punished."

After saying this, she went round the other side of the table, and Judith could not reply.

For some few weeks all went on smoothly, though Fanny and Ellen were very cold and silent now towards Judith; still she tried to be gentle and agreeable whenever they met in study or recreation, and Mr. Shepherd would give her an encouraging smile, and kind help in any difficulty.

On one side of the house there grew a pear-tree ; the fruit was now ripe, and could be gathered from a window of the library, but the children were not allowed to gather any without special permission. They could not reach it from the ground of the enclosure in which the house stood, so that there was very little opportunity for any to transgress this rule. One afternoon Judith was sent to find a book which was supposed to be in the library ; she found the door partly held to by a heavy chair, placed against the inside of it, but pushing hard, she managed to open it ; and then, for a moment, she stood still with horror and surprise.

Ellen Envie was hanging half out of the window, her left hand clutching the window-sill, on which lay two or three pears, her right hand clasping the stem of the pear-tree outside, below the window. She was struggling to regain her balance, and in another instant Judith had sprung forward to help her, but she only managed to reach the place in time to catch hold of Ellen's dress as she fell outwards with a cry of fear, still clutching the stem of the tree, and struggling to find some rest for her feet. There was a very narrow ledge of brickwork just below, and she managed to reach it at last with her toes ; but it only gave a slight support to her overbalanced body ; and if it had not been for Judith's helping hand, she must have fallen after the strain of a few moments on her uncertain hold.

"Oh, Judith, don't leave go!" she cried ; "Judith, if you let go, I must fall to the bottom."

Judith had called loudly for help, but there seemed to be no one on that side of the house, within hearing at least, while the noise in the street helped to make it less hopeful.

"I won't let go!" answered Judith, setting her teeth hard together as she spoke, and pushing her knees closely against the wall under the sill, while she grasped Ellen's dress with both hands. But the strain on her arms and shoulders was getting more and more painful ; the edge of the window-sill seemed cutting into her poor little wrists,

and Ellen seemed to grow heavier each moment ; and still no one heard their cries.

"Ellen, do you think you could hold if I ease my hold a little?—ever so little—it does hurt me, enough to break my arms off!"

"No, no!" cried Ellen, "I can scarcely keep as I am much longer, Judith ; you'll kill me if you do slacken your hold!" and Ellen's terrified face grew whiter as she looked up despairingly to little Judith's troubled eyes above her.

Judith groaned aloud, and then screamed again.

Then Judith saw a man running from a side street and pointing towards them ; she wondered, anxiously, if he could get inside the enclosure in time to help them, but the next moment she saw Mr. Shepherd coming round the corner of the house, and he gave one look to them, calling out, "Hold fast a minute longer, Judith!" then dashing into an outhouse, he soon came towards them with a light ladder.

Ellen was fainting then, and Judith's arms were losing all their power as he placed the ladder quickly against the wall, and running up to within reach of Ellen as she hung, almost lifeless now, he caught her in his arms ; and Judith, after one look to see if Ellen was safe, fell down on her knees in the silent room : the great pain in her arms and back kept her there wrestling with the agony, but still she felt such a thankful joy to think of Ellen's safety.

She heard them bring Ellen into the house, a great confusion going on, for many people had rushed in from the street ; then she heard some one running up the stairs and coming towards the room where she was.

It was Mr. Shepherd, and he was followed by a woman, attendant in the house. They lifted Judith from her knees, and her teeth chattered with pain. They could see how her wrists were swelling, and already a dark red mark was spreading over them ; she moaned when they felt them gently.

"My poor, brave little Judith!" said Mr. Shepherd, "I am so sorry! I will send the doctor, Margaret, he will judge if she is seriously hurt."

Margaret waited with her, and soon the doctor appeared and examined her injured arms and shoulders.

"She must have had a hard struggle," he said, "it is a wonder that there is not serious injury." He bound up her arms with linen, moistened in cooling liquid, and then ordered her to be kept as quiet as possible for a few hours, and he would look in again. He patted her head as he left her, and said cheerfully,

"Good-bye, little Spartan! We must wait a little while before we hear the account of the struggle." Then he beckoned Margaret to the door, and waited till she was in the passage outside. "Her body and mind have had a severe strain, and she will feel it for some time; keep her very quiet."

For a few days Judith had nothing to learn and nothing to do except listening to Margaret's reading, or Mr. Shepherd's kind words. She often asked after Ellen, and they said she was quite well after the first day of the accident; the slight support to her feet, added to Judith's hold, had saved her from so much suffering as her little friend endured.

After a few days, Margaret told Judith that Ellen could not be persuaded to tell them how it happened, and only said, "Ask Judith!"

"But Ellen should tell it herself," said Judith, "for I only—I mean—she was—I can't tell about it."

Margaret looked surprised and grieved.

"But, Judith, you *should* tell,—of course it was for the pears, but still we must know all about it; I wonder at both of you breaking the rules, and it might have been breaking your necks too, just for a few pears!"

Judith was just going to answer hastily, as she started upon her

feet, but she sat down again, and said tearfully, "You must ask Ellen about it."

Mr. Shepherd came in just then, and sat down by Judith's side, and asked her to tell him about the accident. Judith burst into tears, which made him think she was feeling sorry and ashamed for attempting to gather the pears with Ellen.

"Please ask Ellen!" she sobbed.

"But Ellen will not tell me, and says, 'Ask Judith!'—Call Ellen, please, Margaret," added he.

Ellen appeared, looking very confused; she gave a look to Judith, a sort of imploring, frightened expression in her eyes.

"Now," said Mr. Shepherd, "I must hear the reason of your being outside the window, Ellen; and if you were both alike breaking the rules, that is, in stealing the pears. I am grieved and shocked to have to believe it of either! I cannot let such a thing pass unnoticed."

Ellen turned pale, and said, "Judith knows, as well as I do; let her tell all she knows."

Mr. Shepherd turned to Judith, who said, "Must I tell tales, then?"

"Tales!" cried Ellen; "you can just tell what you know."

Judith looked puzzled, and then gave an account of what she had seen and done; then Ellen asked, "You did not *see* me gather any pears, did you?"

"No," said Judith, "but—" then she stopped.

"So there's no proof that *I* gathered those on the sill," cried Ellen; "I might have been looking out, and lost my balance; it is just as likely that *you* left them there, and were coming back for them."

Judith gave an indignant cry, but she was not allowed to speak, for Mr. Shepherd said sternly, "Ellen, you will just answer this question plainly,—did you, or did you not, gather the pears?"

"No," said Ellen, trying to look defiantly into his face.

"Ellen, I am sorry to say I doubt your word; the fact of your

being in the library, with the door blockaded, is enough to cause suspicion ; and then to be hanging outside with your hands actually touching the pears and the tree, makes me think you are not telling the truth. It is such a grievous sin that I shall wait a little while before doing anything more ; and I hope you will think and pray over the matter, and soon tell me, honestly, of your fault."

Ellen had not seen Judith since the day of her brave efforts in her behalf, and though she heard how much Judith had suffered, she did not now say a word of thanks, but as soon as Mr. Shepherd had finished speaking, and had walked to the window, she slipped out of the room.

Mr. Shepherd remained a little while with Judith, and was very kind and gentle towards her, but his face was troubled, and Judith could only think of Ellen's dreadful disregard for truth.

Ellen herself was feeling very miserable ; how could she be anything else ? She knew that all the teachers, and especially Mr. Shepherd, looked coldly upon her, while most of the children, who shared her studies and amusements, avoided her as much as possible ; they knew that she was the cause of Judith's sufferings, and could see that Ellen had not been restored to favour by repentance and confession of her sin.

Judith joined the rest in a week, and quietly took her place as before ; Ellen was sullenly silent ; all the children came round Judith, and greeted her kindly ; she said very little in answer to their inquiries about the accident, and Ellen was very glad to hear nothing more about it ; but she could not return to her former cheerfulness ; the weight of deceit and obstinacy was never absent.

One day, soon after Judith's recovery, she was in the playground with several other children, and in passing the shed before mentioned, she heard a sob from within. She pushed the door open, and saw Ellen sitting on the ladder which had been used to save her, and crying bitterly.

Judith's tender heart was touched ; she went in, and put her arm round Ellen's neck.

"Go away, Judith."

"No, please, let me stay, Ellen ; I am so sorry !"

"Sorry for me ? I'm too bad for you to mind !"

"No, you're not, Ellen, I mind very much, and so does Mr. Shepherd, I know—and oh, Ellen, what will the Master say ? The thought of that always helps me when *I* feel wicked."

"Well, I don't often think about *Him*," replied Ellen ; "you know He is away, and we never see Him."

"But He knows all about us."

Ellen cried on, and Judith sat still, wishing she could think of something to say to lead Ellen to do right.

Presently Ellen said, "What shall I do, Judith ?"

"Oh, do go and see Mr. Shepherd, he will help you," cried Judith ; "come along, Ellen, come now !"

"I'm so miserable, I think I will, Judith."

"Come," said Judith, "I will fetch him into the chapel to you."

She left Ellen kneeling in the silent chapel, not knowing what to say or think ; only a great sorrow in her heart. Soon Mr. Shepherd came to her, and Judith could scarcely help singing aloud for joy as she returned into the outhouse, and sat reading there till dinner-time.

Ellen's face was tearful but happy when she took her place at the table ; and she gave Judith a smile which seemed to say that all was forgiven now ; and after dinner, the two girls went together into the playground for a little while, when Ellen told Judith how sorry she felt for all her past unkindness to her, and promised to try to be more loving and gentle in future. She said how very unhappy she had been for several days, longing to tell the whole truth, but pride would not let her do so, feeling sure all the time that Mr. Shepherd and Judith were anxious for her to do right and be happy, praying for her while she would not pray for herself ; and now she was so

glad, so happy, so thankful for the new desires and motives that had been given her.

Judith got on well with her lessons and work, her teachers were pleased with her, and she was generally very happy; now and then the old battles with pride and temper had to be fought again, but she was always sorry and ashamed when she had given way at all, and went on again bravely and humbly, while Mr. Shepherd encouraged and aided her at any time that she sought his help.

Fanny had received more authority now, and I am sorry to say that Judith could not easily submit to it; she tried sometimes to like Fanny, and be more obedient to her rule; but when she heard the sharp tone and hasty rebuke, her spirit rose, and she almost or quite hated her for the time; of course this was very wrong, and Mr. Shepherd spoke very gravely about it, but in spite of tearful promises and resolutions, Judith still failed in this matter.

One summer evening, she was in the playground, weeding her little garden under the railings, which divided it from a side street, when a boy's voice said, "Here's a root for you."

She looked up quickly, and took the root of a piece of "London Pride" from his hand, saying, "Thank you," when her eyes fixed themselves on his face, and Judith's face grew red and pale by turns, as she saw Tom Laikes before her, dirty and ragged as ever, only a little bigger than when she last saw him.

"Tom!" she said at last, in a frightened voice.

"Why—if it ain't Judie!" he answered slowly, as he climbed up the railings, eagerly looking at her.

Just then Fanny Power threw open an upper window, and said angrily, "Judith, come in doors this minute!"

Judith obeyed, feeling both anxious to stay and talk to Tom, and also afraid of him, lest through him she should be found and captured by Bell.

Fanny called again, "Make haste, come in directly!" and meeting

her in the doorway, she scolded her vigorously for "talking to a nasty, dirty boy!"

Judith answered passionately, saying, "He gave me a flower for my garden; there's no harm in that!"

"There is harm, and you must not do such a thing any more; talking to street boys!"

Judith felt angry, and thought she would ask Mr. Shepherd about it; and, I am sorry to say, a great feeling of proud triumph against Fanny filled her heart, when, that afternoon, on meeting Mr. Shepherd in the hall, and telling him of the matter, she asked him if it was wrong to take the flower from the boy, he said, "Certainly not."

"Fanny said it was, sir, and scolded me."

He looked at her gravely, and Judith felt guilty and ashamed; she knew she was showing her uncharitable feeling towards another, and her anger at being reproved; he answered, "I suppose she thought you might learn evil if you talked with the poor boy; she could not object to the flower being given to you."

He was going away, when Judith said, "Oh, please let me talk to you, sir; it was Tom Laikes."

"And who is Tom Laikes?" asked he, with a smile.

"He lived in our court, sir; he gave me the puppy."

"What puppy, Judith?"

"The puppy that was killed, and he helped me to run away."

"Oh, yes, I remember,—where is he now, I wonder?"

"I don't know,—Fanny—I didn't have time to ask."

Mr. Shepherd stood thinking a moment.

"Oh, do you think he'll go and tell them where I am?" cried Judith, in a troubled voice.

"Perhaps," he answered; "but, Judith, I was thinking that—"

"Oh! don't send me back!" almost screamed the little girl; "you *won't* send me back?"

"No, my child; not alone, at any rate."

"Oh, but not at all!" cried she, terror and dismay in her face and tone—"I—I—*won't go!*"

"Judith!" said Mr. Shepherd, sorrowfully.

She burst into tears, and hid her face.

"Now listen to me, you foolish little one," he said, drawing her to his side, as he sat down in his own room; "are you afraid we will send you away into danger and sin after having you with us, and loving you, dear little Judith, with all your faults, for the dear Master's sake, as well as your own?"

"I'm very sorry," said she, sighing deeply, "I was so frightened, it made me feel *so* bad!"

"Well, now this is what I was going to say: I think we might go and see the poor people in the court, and try to do them some good; if you see Tom again, ask him to come to the door, and we will hear if he can tell you anything of your parents."

Judith trembled again, but she knew she could trust her friend, and now that she was quieter after the first fear of the moment, she felt quite anxious to see Tom again.

She met Fanny as she left the room, and said to her, "Mr. Shepherd has given me leave to call Tom in, if I see him again."

"What are you talking about, child?" said Fanny.

Judith felt vexed again; she liked Mr. Shepherd to call her "child," but it did not seem pleasant when Fanny did so.

"The boy who gave me the 'London Pride,'" said Judith.

Fanny stared for a while, and then said coaxingly, "Well, I didn't think he would like you to talk to him, you know; who is Tom?"

Judith was silent, she did not care to tell more.

"Oh you needn't tell me," said Fanny sharply, "he is not an interesting looking object at all!"

And, as she passed on, she left Judith struggling hard against her dislike to Fanny's ways, and then she remembered Mr. Shepherd's words about this very thing; how he had told her to take all such

things as exercise for her patience and charity, and a share in the Master's sorrows; and then she felt ashamed to think how often she forgot to follow in His steps; "but I'll keep always *trying*," said little Judith, bravely, as she ran along the passage and went into the little chapel for a few moments to ask for help; and then joined the others and their studies.

CHAPTER IV.

TOM Laikes was very anxious to see Judith again, and he determined to watch for her as often as he could.

The very next morning Judith saw him waiting in the same place, and she called him round to the front door, and then sought Mr. Shepherd.

"Come in, my boy," he said, and he took him into his own room, telling Judith to wait outside.

Presently he called her in, and she could not help feeling shy and frightened at meeting her companion of the old troubled times.

Tom looked rather shy too, and said nothing, he only stared at Judith; perhaps he was thinking how very different she looked from little Judie of old.

Mr. Shepherd soon spoke to her, and told her all he had heard from Tom, which was that her father had never been seen since the morning when Judith ran away; he had not come home to dinner as usual that day, and it was not till a week afterwards that they heard of his having run away with some money which belonged to his master, and that it was supposed he had gone to America. His wife had grieved for his loss, but never mentioned Judith; and now Bell herself was very ill in bed, nursed by the next neighbour.

"We will go and see her to-morrow," said Mr. Shepherd, as he

gave Tom some nice bread and butter, with a cup of fresh milk, and the boy went home to tell the news of Judith's fate.

The next day Mr. Shepherd and Judith set out for the old home. It looked dirtier than ever, and many strange faces met them as they entered the court. Judith led her friend to Bell's house, and he entered, while the child shrank out of sight as she met Bell's eyes fixed upon her strangely, and she asked eagerly, "Who's that girl?"

"It is your step-daughter, 'Judith,'" said Mr. Shepherd, "she is come to help you if she can."

"I don't want her," cried Bell, "take her away!"

"I will, presently, but let us hear what we can do for you in your sickness," he replied.

"I don't want anything from you," said Bell, sulkily, and then she turned her face to the wall and said no more.

Mr. Shepherd spoke to the neighbour, who said that it was a difficult task to wait upon Bell, she was so peevish, and would not do as she was advised. She had persisted in getting up once or twice, but had fallen down each time; the doctor said they must keep her quiet, but she could not bear to be nursed as an invalid.

When Judith came near to speak to her she grew very angry, and bade her go away and find her father.

"We will inquire after him," said Mr. Shepherd, "and you shall hear the first news we have."

This seemed to soothe her a little, and she lay quiet while Judith made some broth warm and gave it to the neighbour, who persuaded her patient to take some.

"Will you let Judith stay and help to nurse you to-day?" asked Mr. Shepherd.

"No, no, I tell you I don't want her, she makes me feel bad when I think of old times."

"But we needn't think of them," said Judith, "I'll be willing to

stay now, if I may," she added, looking at her kind friend, for Judith felt that Bell was dying, and she could not bear to think of her going away without hearing anything of the Master's love.

"I will stay with her at nights," said the neighbour, "but Judie might come and help in the day-time."

"I can't find food for her," cried Bell.

"Oh, she shall bring her own food," said Mr. Shepherd.

Bell said no more, and he left, telling Judith to come when he sent for her in the evening. She began to do what she could to make the room look tidy, and the neighbour went into her own house for an hour, while Bell lay and watched Judith suspiciously.

Every morning found the child working bravely, and, as a rule, cheerfully, in the old home, while Bell grew better on good food and greater care.

One morning, when Judith entered the court, there was a crowd round the old house, and Tom met her, saying the old woman had set fire to the house somehow, and it had only just been noticed.

Judith sprang forwards; "Where is she?" she cried.

"We daren't go in to see," answered a man, "the house is that old, we must try to save the next houses; I fancy she is smothered with the smoke, and it is clear murder to go in, for it's the front part that is burning, and we might never get out again."

Judith gasped out something about "back way!" and, to the horror of the lookers on, she darted through the thick smoke that poured out of the doorway, and, as she did so, the flames leapt out, making the crowd dart back almost as quickly, but she had reached the inner room where Bell was lying when she saw her last; but now there was no one in it, only thick clouds of smoke.

"Mother, where are you?" screamed the child, as she held her dress before her mouth to keep the smoke from her choking throat; "oh, Master, help me!"

Then she heard a groan from the doorway leading to the attic,

nearer the flaming front room, and there she saw Bell lying, with her hands grasping the edge of the stairs.

"Listen to me!" cried Judith, speaking loudly but very firmly in her ear, "you *must* get up and climb the stairs, or you will be dead in a few minutes." Then, with all her little strength, she strove to help the woman up.

"I *can't*!" said Bell huskily; but then another burst of flame flashed out, and with a desperate effort, she rose and stumbled up three steps.

"Now, again!" cried Judith, though she could scarcely speak, the smoke came thicker and thicker into her white lips; "if you can but reach the top, there's a safe way out!"

Again Bell scrambled on, Judith helping with a strength that seemed more than her own, and now they reached the doorway at last; Bell leaned against the wall as Judith pulled the latch—but the door did not move. She pushed and kicked it, all in vain; then Bell tried to say something, but her lips moved only, and she fell heavily on the landing. Judith sprang into the attic, but only to the door; smoke and flames were pouring up outside the window, and the room was like a burning oven. She went back to Bell's side, and knelt down beside her, hiding her face in her hands, that she might not see the flames, which the wind was blowing to the front of the house, where the fire had first been kindled.

"Oh, Master, help!" cried Judith once more, "and forgive us all our—" and then the smoke caught away the next word, and she fell down by Bell's still figure, the small hands clasped tightly in prayer.

The next moment the door was wrenched open by some one on the other side, and they were both lifted in strong arms, and carried quickly into the back street.

Tom had thought of the back way, but not at once, and then it had taken a few moments to get round to the back street, after he had prevailed on some of the men to come with him, for at first they had

declared "it was no use, they *must* be dead directly, and there were living people to look to!"

After a while, Judith opened her eyes, just as some of Tom's friends had brought Mr. Shepherd to the spot; he had heard of his little friend's bravery in entering the burning house, and he ran to her with a very eager look in his face, and something very like a tear in his eye; she raised herself, and looked wonderingly at the crowd around her.

They were all talking about her: she wondered why, and a cheer rose up as she looked at them; very soon she remembered all, and turned eagerly, asking for "Mother!"

"She is safe, my brave little woman," said a friendly voice. It was the kind neighbour's, she had only just returned from the market in time to see the end; "she is in bed yonder."

Then Mr. Shepherd gave orders for a cart to be got ready, and Bell was lifted into it with Judith, and both were taken to the Home. There Judith helped to make Bell's last days pass quietly and happily away, for she never recovered from the shock the fire had given her. She told them how it had happened; how her dress had caught the flame in the grate as she was reaching for a mug on the mantelpiece, although her neighbour had advised her to sit still in her absence. Then she tried to gain the door, but fell; then she had rolled herself in the old piece of carpet beneath her, which put out the flames on her person; but, unfortunately, in passing the table, she had set fire to the very old coloured table-cloth, which had lately been added as a piece of luxury for the sick room, by the kind neighbour, and so the fire had spread to the front wall and door, and Bell had at last crept to the foot of the stairs. When the fire was discovered, it was reckoned too late to save her; the people were none of them brave enough to risk their sinful lives for Bell's sake!

Judith was very patient with the sick woman, who was often peevish and wearisome, but love and faith had their reward; for, by

degrees, Bell grew sensible of all their care and kindness, and then she told Mr. Shepherd how sorry she was for all her past life ; and at last, when she died in humble faith, she said to Judith,

"If ever you see your father, tell him how sorry I was for all the past ; and tell him you were my greatest blessing !"

But Judith never saw her father again. He died in the distant land of his exile ; and Judith lived many years in the Home, visiting her old friends in Mammon Court, where they listened to her gentle words, and loved her for her simple life of kindness to all within her reach. She loved best to find out poor little ones who were lost and suffering as she once had been, and to bring them to hear of the great love and tender blessings which the Master had left them, and which He was going to increase so largely on His return. Tom Laikes went to sea, after attending school for some time, and Mr. Shepherd sometimes heard of him as being a brave, good man.

And so we will hope that at last they all found an entrance into the bright and happy kingdom, where there is no more sorrow, suffering, nor want,—because *there is no sin*.

"And the meaning of Judith's rescue?" said Auntie.

"We are hereby made the children of grace," said Harry.

"And I suppose she *was* baptized after all," added little Ivy, "because they gave her clean clothes and a new name when they took her into the Home.—I guessed *that* Parable, Auntie! I should have had to cry *very* much if poor little Judie had been burnt up, you know."

"And the kind Master's Home of Refuge, what does *that* mean?" said Auntie.

"CHRIST'S *Church*," answered Ethel.

BEACON LIGHT.

A LIGHT came shining clear and fair
Upon my way so wild and dreary ;
It brightened up the desert where
The road had seemed so lone and weary !
Its gleams were borrowed from above,
And pointing heavenwards were its rays ;
It spoke of purity and love,
And hope and peace for many days.

I tried to follow where it led
With steady beam so calm and bright,
And hope upheld my weary head
When for a time I lost its light.
And now by faith through shadows drawn
Its memory still shall cheer my way ;
GOD grant that on the shadeless morn
I see it shine in perfect day !

BAPTISM.

I SAW a loving Shepherd with His sheep,
Calling around Him all that were His own ;
And tender lambs were gather'd round His feet,
Bearing the mark by which His sheep are known.

Then a fond mother came with one sweet lamb
On either side—so beautiful and fair !
But though the mother bore the Shepherd's name,
The lambs both failed His name and sign to bear.

And then I saw the Shepherd's loving eyes
Bent tenderly upon them as they stood,
The while with gentle sorrowful surprise
He said, " These are not washed and marked with Mine
own blood !"

" Master, *I* thought that there was no such need,"
Replied the mother, smiling on each lamb,
" I know Thou knowest, and canst keep and feed
These little ones, though they bear not Thy name."

The Shepherd answered gently, " Thou dost know
That ever since I came to save My sheep,
I have ordain'd that all My seal shall show,
And bear the name that all Mine own shall keep.

" As Jacob claimed all that were *marked*, and drew
Them all away from treach'rous Laban's hand,
So I have bid My under-shepherds do
With Mine, until they reach the better land.

" That should they stray from Me to other fields,
Both friend and foe shall know them for Mine own ;
And I will look upon My signed and sealed,
And in them see My covenant alone.

" The witness of the covenant I made
The witness of their claim upon My love ;
The token that makes Satan's hosts afraid
Of those who to it firm and faithful prove !

" And, in that ordinance, mysterious grace
Is given, with new life, to all My sheep ;
And they shall surely dwell before My face
Who My commands shall humbly, fully keep.

" And when upon earth's bosom they shall rest,
The shepherds who are sent, direct, by Me,
Shall testify that these indeed are blest,
Redeemed and sanctified and sealed to Me.

" Then in My FATHER'S fold the brightest gem
That shines revealed in Heavenly love and light
Shall be the sign that gleams with His own name,
Traced while on earth with faith, in water bright."

" Oh, Master ! tender Shepherd, take my lambs,
And wash, and sign, and seal them Thine own way ;
Then let the lustre of the Holy Names
Upon their brows, keep all dread foes away !"

VICTOR'S JOURNEY.

"IT is a long time since you told us 'a parable story,' Aunt Nellie," said Harry, one warm day in June ;—"I don't believe we have had *one* since—since little sister Ivy was—here to listen with us."

Harry stammered over the last words, for he could hardly bear to speak of the gentle little sister whom every one loved so well, and who had gone away—ah ! so suddenly, yet peacefully, to the fair Garden of GOD.

Aunt Nellie looked grave for a few minutes while her thoughts flew back a month or two ; then, putting aside the regrets that rose, she answered gently—"Dear little loving Ivy ! how happy she must be now !—Yes, if you and Ethel like to come out into the garden I will do my best, Harry, dear."

Soon they were seated in a pleasant shady nook, and Aunt Nellie said brightly, "Children, what a sweet and beautiful home GOD has given you !" She thought awhile, and then began her story.

In just such a lovely garden as this, where the close of a bright spring day was falling softly on the fresh young leaves and tender flowers, a boy about twelve years old was lying idly on the grass, with a book just finished beside him, and a cluster of ruthlessly plucked apple blossoms on his breast ; while not far from him a man was sitting on a bench under a wide-spreading tree. He was gazing at the boy with a look of wistful love, and now called him to his side ; then laying one hand on the dark curly head upheld so confidently, he said tenderly, "Victor, you must be brave and patient now. You are of an age to understand and wrestle with the things outside this quiet garden ; you have wider work, a battle to fight, a home to win."

"I am glad!" cried the boy. "I am tired of this little garden, I want to go ever so far away, and see all the world if I can."

"You shall do so, Victor, but you must go alone, at least you will not see me again until you win that home, whence you will never wish to wander any more."

"I *cannot*!" cried the boy, despairingly. "How *could* I go out, or work, or fight, when I know nothing of the world, and have always had you by me?"

"My heart and spirit will be with you, Victor, to keep you still if you desire my help; but it is best for you that I should leave you. Now listen carefully:

"When you hear me call your name you must rise at once, leave this garden, and go out into the high road; but do not travel along it with the busy crowd going to market. You will see a stile just opposite, climb over it, and you will find yourself in a grassy field. Do not stop to look farther than the path before you; if fair flowers are planted by your side you can thankfully enjoy their fragrance, but do not wander aside after others. You will soon come to a small river, cross it by the little bridge which you will see at the end of the path. Next you will come on to a wide moorland with a shady lane skirting it, you must take the narrow path across the moorland, climb the hill before you in the distance, and pass through the wood near its summit. Then carefully descend the other side of the hill, faithfully plunge into the river at its foot, and you will see your home in its beauty; and I shall be waiting for you there. Only be brave, patient, and humble, Victor; and let love to me be your heart's never-failing test and strength."

"I will follow you," said the boy, "you are my only friend—oh, call me soon!"

When the morning broke, fresh and fair, Victor was alone; he sought his friend in vain, and at last he remembered his injunctions. "Patience, now," he said to himself, "I must listen for the call."

He went about his daily duties in the little garden, sorely missing the help he had counted on before, he plucked up some weeds, trained the rose sprays, for he knew that his friend would wish him not to neglect the work which lay near him while he waited for the call. Several days went by and yet no voice was heard, and Victor felt lonely, and could scarcely stifle the impression that he was forgotten now! But he seemed to hear again the kind voice, saying, "Be brave and patient!" Then the call came. In the early morning a soft voice, which he knew and loved, said "Come!" So Victor rose gladly, and bade farewell to all his childhood's treasures, and taking with him the guide-book provided by his friend he passed out into the high road, strengthened with some wonderful food which his friend had ordered his servant to dispense.

His heart beat high with hope and love as he bravely passed over the busy thoroughfare, now thronged with market people, some of whom offered to convey him to the neighbouring town; Victor declined gravely, but gently.

"If you want to get on to the moor you should go through the town, it is much pleasanter," said a youth; but the boy shook his head, and gladly leaped over the stile into the pleasant meadow beyond it.

Victor stood still for a while on reaching the other side of the little stile, and cast his eyes this way and that way over the picture which met his view.

A large open meadow lay before him, part of it hidden by a winding hedge enclosing a large corner of it which stretched away, almost behind him, to the left.

The spring time had covered the grass and hedges with tempting flowers and grasses, and Victor had always been fond of collecting and arranging them. He remembered his friend's commands on the subject, how he might thankfully gather those at the side of the path, but not go aside for any; he wondered why this should be the rule

when so many fair blossoms would be thus unenjoyed, and while he was questioning it in his mind a bright-coloured little bird flew down close to his feet: he crept on a step, and stooped down to catch it, but the bird flew a yard farther off. Victor longed to hold it in his hand, and pursued it again, and again the bird took a flight only a step or two on; and Victor got quite eager, and almost held his breath as he crept after it, with outstretched hand so nearly touching it! on and on, little by little, the bird led him farther to the left, round the corner of the hedge, and out of sight of the narrow path among the tall grass.

At last the little flutterer rose higher on the wing and cleared the hedge with a merry twitter, much to Victor's disappointment. He looked after it some time in vain, and then began to gather some of the hedge flowers and grasses. Presently he remembered the forsaken pathway, but he had not taken any notice of the direction in which it lay, all his thoughts had been given to the tempting prize, step by step. He turned round, but the winding shape of the meadow puzzled him, he had never left his quiet home and the garden until now, and also was alone for the first time in his struggles. Not a sign of the path could he trace as he retraced a few steps; he began to feel a lonely fear, and hated the things which had tempted him aside. He threw the flowers hastily on the ground, and looked again with straining eyes for a glimpse of the road, but the grass waved softly all over the field, smooth and fair to see, only Victor knew that he must not, and could not rest among its beauty and ease; and he cried out earnestly for help, calling out his friend's name longingly.

To his great delight he soon saw a man coming through the meadow. "He must be in the right path," thought Victor, as he watched the figure moving above the waving grass, and again he shouted to the man—asking if he was in the narrow roadway.

The traveller replied cheerfully, "Yes, come to me!" and Victor

gladly recognized the voice of one of his friend's servants who happened to be passing on his way to help a sick child.

Victor sprang gladly towards him through the grass and flowers, but he did not find it easy or nearly so pleasant as it looked. Hidden thorns and nettles scratched him on his eager way, an angry bee which he brushed roughly aside stung him on the hand, and he reached the servant's side in tears and shame, and told him in broken words of his fruitless wanderings.

But he received comfort and courage from the gentle words in reply, as he heard how the Master would forgive him now he was penitent, and still keep him on his journey.

"Come with me!" cried Victor—"I told him that I could *not* go alone!"

"I may not," answered the servant; "you must depend chiefly on *his* help and presence, and be faithful to that, if you would find him in your true home."

And then he gave Victor some more of the wondrous strengthening Food, and left him, with a blessing in the Master's Name.

Victor felt as if he could never stray again, and with eager hope, and thinking of the promised peace and home at last, he walked on cheerfully, thankfully; singing in chorus with the larks above his head, as they trilled out their thankful hymns.

But, alas! there was one mistake in his renewed efforts and resolution. The curly brown head was held high, in proud confidence of self-acting power and will, as he reckoned himself above all temptation now!

The sun was at its height as he reached at last the end of the meadow pathway, and came near to the sparkling stream with the narrow plank-bridge straight before him. A boy about his own age was lying idly on the bank, throwing stones into the flowing waters. He looked up gladly when he saw Victor, and spoke at once in a fresh, pleasant voice.

"Are you going across? so am I, and it will be much nicer to have company; the moor yonder looks so very bleak and bare, I am in no hurry to try it!"

"Aren't you?" answered Victor,—“oh, come along; it is no use staying here.”

"But the stream is so cool-looking and pleasant; and the bridge looks hardly safe," replied the idler,—young Craven by name.

Victor looked awhile on the glistening stream, and ran down the bank for a taste of the tempting tide.

"I tell you what," said his new companion, "we will walk down the bank as far as the wide bridge down yonder, and see if it is not a nicer way over; it looks a capital bridge, and we could fish from it safely; there is hardly room to stand on this!"

"I will not stop to fish," said Victor, doubtfully, "it would never do! but the bridge certainly does look pleasanter down there, and it can make very little difference in the time."

Craven sprang to his feet and said, "Of course not;" and so they went together along the bank of the stream, talking gaily as they saw the fish leaping, and the water grasses drooping their heads over the murmuring wavelets.

As the boys neared the lower bridge they met an old man who asked them if they were thinking of crossing that way, and when Craven replied with a hasty "Yes," he advised them to return to the one they had just left, for, said he, "this new one was never properly built, the foundation is not on a safe bed, and the late rains and high floods have made it very unsafe."

But Craven laughed scornfully, and told him to take care of himself and leave them alone.

Victor blushed for his friend and thanked the old man, adding however, that the bridge looked safe.

"Ay, ay, but you will wish you had not been so wilful, young masters!" said the other, as he shook his grey head, and planted his

stick in the path before him. "I saw it shake just now when a lad came running over it, and he looked pleased, I can tell you, when he found himself safe over."

"So shall we on the other side," laughed Craven, "and hope you will enjoy your walk to the other bridge, old boy," and then he took Victor's arm and led him on, rather against his will, for he felt some inward influence bidding him join the old man on his journey; however, Craven interrupted his thoughts by pointing to a leaping fish. "I have a line in my pocket, and we can fish for a little while," said he.

"Only a *little* while then," said Victor, and the boys were soon standing on the bridge, leaning over the railing, intent on their sport; and the old man had not gone far on his way before he heard a crash and a shrill scream. Looking back he saw the boys were both in the water, the bridge scattered in pieces around them.

Victor had fallen into a hole between two rocks, but Craven was struggling on the top of the water, which was fortunately bearing him down towards his old friend, who waded in fearlessly as far as he could, and then as the boy drifted towards the spot, senseless from fear, he stretched out his hooked stick, and, with an earnest prayer for success, managed to catch hold of his coat by the breast-opening, and by a dexterous pull got him within reach of his hand. Then with great exertion, for he was old and feeble, he drew the lad on to the bank.

Victor was standing in the water, fortunately in a shallow hole, and watched the rescue breathlessly, powerless to help, and sick with fear and remorse. A labourer had heard their screams, and was now at the spot where the bridge had been; seeing Victor, he bade him keep still while he ran for a rope. After a few moments he returned and threw it into Victor's outstretched hands; telling him to clamber over the rocks carefully, and he would help him in the deep water if he happened to fall in.

Victor prayed an instant for pardon and help, he longed to be at Craven's side ; then carefully placing his feet first on one slippery stone and then on another, he was landed at last, with only wet feet and knees. With a hearty thanksgiving he sprang on to where the old man was rubbing Craven's body.

"There is no house very near," said he, "except my old cottage ; if we could carry him there, he could get a warm bed and some coffee."

"We'll soon do that, Master Charity," said the labourer, lifting Craven from the bank, and carrying him quickly over the plank-bridge into a small cottage on the other side, at the edge of the moor.

Victor shook the old man's hand warmly as they both followed, the old man could see how sorry and ashamed he was, and said nothing, only a quiet "Thank you, sir," as Victor steadied his feeble steps across the narrow plank.

Craven soon came to himself. He had put Victor into a terrible state of anxiety and regret by his pale, still appearance, but the warmth of the bed and fire restored the flow of his life-blood ; and after a wondering look, and then a shudder, he spoke some incoherent words of inquiry.

The old man gave him some hot coffee, which the boy took with an awkward shamefaced air, and then asked how they had got him out of the water.

Victor eagerly told him all, and Craven turned to his preserver, saying, "Much obliged to you, I'm sure."

"I can never thank you enough," cried Victor, "for I should never have forgiven myself if he had been lost." Then he thanked the kind labourer, giving him also a hearty handshake, and offering him shyly a small present of money—but it was not taken.

"No, no, thanks to you, young master, but I was only doing my duty," replied the man, as he left the cottage with a respectful, "Good day, Master Charity."

Craven soon started up, and said he must go on his way now ; and

again thanking their old friend, who would take nothing in payment, they found themselves at the commencement of the moorland path. It looked lonely and wild, Craven gave a shrug, and exclaimed, "None of that for *me* ; I shall take the other road."

Victor urged him to try the narrow moorland path. "It is the *right* way, and there is only *one*," said he.

But Craven turned away after one more look over the dusky moor, and took the winding road to the left, with his hands in his pockets and whistling a merry tune, while Victor looked after him vexed and disappointed, saying to himself, "To think I should have wasted so much time in *his* company ; he has no heart at all !"

The sun was high in the heavens, and Victor, for a moment only, shrank from the bare moorlands, but then a voice seemed to whisper, "This is the way *He* went !" and with new courage the boy began his journey again ; thinking of the bright home and loving welcome waiting beyond the hill, feeling more unworthy than ever of the promised rest there ; and as he bowed his head in humble prayer once more a flood of sunlight fell on the distant height, as a sheltering cloudlet came between him and the burning sun.

"If I can reach the hill-top in daylight," thought he, "the rest will be easy ; but oh ! what time I have wasted,—such precious time !"

Craven looked back once, saw Victor standing still after their parting, and shouted gaily, "Come along, don't venture that way, you silly !" But the next moment he saw his late companion walking briskly up the narrow pathway. As Craven resumed his way, a group of boys stood before him, close to the bank of a river which flowed that way to the town.

"Here's another passenger !" they cried ; "come for a row on the river, will you ?"

Craven gladly consented, and they all stepped into a boat, and pushed off at once, though after his late experience Craven felt a

little uneasy on the water, till they laughed at his fear, saying, "the boat was as safe as a house." But, alas, it sank soon, with them all!

The stillness of the bare moorland gave Victor a feeling of loneliness for a time, but he soon found objects of interest even there, and the larks sang just as sweetly as over the grass meadows; wonderful insects too crept about among the bushes and grasses, in the heather with its graceful bells and fresh scents. So he plodded bravely on over mounds and hollows, taking the narrow sandy path which led towards the wooded hill, and evening was coming on when he reached the summit and plunged into the thick mass of trees there. The darkness awed him, but he caught sight of clear sky with a golden light over it between the tree tops. Once a wild animal startled him terribly by rising up suddenly beside his path, but he clutched his staff and faced it boldly, calling on his Friend for help, and the creature crept sulkily away. Once he nearly trod upon a snake, but it darted away with an angry hiss.

The sun was setting fast as he hastened down the other side of the mighty hill, and the river at its foot glimmered strangely in the dusk. Many a slip and many a fall had Victor, and sometimes courage and hope almost failed, the darkness seemed to be coming on so fast. He lingered to help a weary child, and led it carefully beside him until a strong man overtook them and carried the child down by a steeper path,—but Victor would not leave the track he felt safest in.

He was very footsore and weary when he reached the level near the river, and there the rush and roar of its waters alarmed him, but he still toiled on bravely and full of patient hope now, for in the dim light he could see his Friend standing in a shining spot across the river. His heart beat high with gladness, though his steps were feeble now. The nearer he got to the water's edge the plainer he saw his Friend, and at last could hear his voice, saying in a deep glad tone, "Come!"

Victor trembled as he stood on the bank above the rushing tide, but as he stepped down into it a flash of unspeakable glory lit up the opposite shore, his Friend's arms seemed stretched out to clasp him, while a wave seemed to rise and take him on its soft crest, and bore him gently across—to Rest, and Peace, and Love for evermore!

DREAM SONG.

I HAD wandered, and was weary
Of the noonday glare and heat,
When I reached a wayside shelter,
Cooling fount and mossy seat.

The wild honeysuckle wreathing
Perfumed beauty o'er my head,
And the skylark music breathing
As the sweet wild choir it led.

But I dared not stay to rest me ;
Yet while I thought to go
A slumber soft possessed me,
And a voice sang sweet and low,—

“ Ah, earthworn pilgrim, hear Me,
Let thy spirit heavenward rise ;
There is rest for ever near Me,
In My pure Paradise !”

(Song heard in a dream.)

BAPTISM OF MY GODCHILD, N. M. G.

“He took them up in His arms, and blessed them.”

TO-DAY another child we give into Thine arms,
Another little lamb we yield unto Thy care ;
The dove flies to the ark 'mid earth's alarms,
Stretch out Thy saving Hand, and keep her there !

This frail bark on the ocean of Thy love
We launch,—Thou knowest whether storms or calms betide,—
We pray Thee, to Thy haven-home above,
O'er calm and troublous waves Thine own to guide.

Oh rest her in Thy sweetest Love, Thou SAVIOUR GOD,
The world can neither give nor take away that peace :
Incline her helpless feet into the road
That leads to Thy eternal boundless bliss.

Let not the hollow sounds of worldly pride or mirth
Entice the pure young heart that now is made Thine own,
Let her not seek the rest and joy on earth
Which can be found in Thee and Heaven alone.

For the baptismal drops all fair and bright
That fell in blessings on her baby brow to-day,
Speak of the Blood poured out on Calvary's height,
To win for her the bliss that lasts for aye.

We thank Thee, SAVIOUR, that Thou hast laid claim
To this Thine own creation, saved by Thee,
O write within the Book of Life the name
Bestowed to-day in Thine, Most Holy TRINITY.

And to this Font, entwined with blossoms sweet,
And in this house, restored for praise and prayer,
We bring this precious offering to Thy feet ;
LORD, make, and keep, her soul Thy garden fair.

YOU AND I.

TWO streams are flowing from one Fountain Head,
But parted soon, each in a narrow bed
Flows on—the one so calm and pure,
The other wandering, changing evermore.
Yet unto both is given at times to lave
The cornfield banks with freshening, trembling wave.

What though no mighty works upon them wait ?
What though they bear no rich resplendent freight ?
Though but to water tiny seed,
Though but the fainting germ they feed,
Yet at their Master's Feet their works they cast,
And pray that in the Crystal Sea they meet at last !

BABY PRATTLE.

L. D. S.,

AGED 1 YEAR 10 MONTHS.

A LITTLE sunny face,
Two eyes of sweetest blue,
A roguish baby-grace,
A voice like ringdove's coo.

'Tis heard at early morn,
Calling "Aunt May" for "taa-a,"¹
Through window on the lawn,
"Nummies!² two?" (what tones they are!)

Then sleep-beholden eyes,
And little nodding head,
Hands grasping flowery prize,
And "lub-lub,"³ or wee spade.

We hear him at the door,
And next a soft tap-tap,
(When dinner-time is o'er,)
And now on Auntie's lap

¹ Walking, or riding out.

² Biscuits.

³ Toy pail.

A tiny figure sits,
While rosy lips receive
The juicy orange bits,
Which Aunt May loves to give.

Then comes the merry play,
With crow and shout of joy ;
O, loving heart so gay !
O, little happy boy !

Now comes the eager cry,
With haste to window-seat,
As "kup-kuppee!"¹ goes by,
O, restless hands and feet !

And then a plaintive "w-o-w"
Tells doggie is outside :
Then "kuppee" "c-a-i-r-h"² tells how,
With "Mungie,"³ they did ride.

Next, talk of "Auntie 'Mar,'"
Who's gone to "Jarbidee ;"⁴
Who's gone away for "taa-a,"
With "puff-puff" and "kuppee."

Away with "Mungie" now
To spend the happy hours,
Returning glad to show
How "Mungie" jumped for flowers.

¹ Horse (descriptive of sound of hoofs.)

³ Nurse Bella.

² Carriage.

⁴ Germany.

Again at eve we see
The baby boy so bright,
In tiny *robe de nuit*
He murmurs "goodee night."

Then, laughing, cries "toe-toes!"
Inviting chase and fun :
And so to rest he goes,—
GOD bless thee, little one !

And send a dream of thee
To parents far away,¹
And bring them home to see
Their boy, one happy day.

*Niton, I. of Wight,
June, 1877.*

¹ In India.

THE KNIGHT AND THE MONK.

OH, gaily rode Sir Hubert through the leafy woods one morning,
As his noble steed sped lightly o'er the greensward 'neath the
boughs,
Young gallants followed swiftly, and none heeded word or warning,
Of the rough ways that were hidden, narrowing paths and peaty
sloughs.

So their merriment grew wilder as the laugh and jest came freely,
While the clear air whistled by them, and the rival steeds sped on ;
Brave Sir Hubert kept the foremost, and as he plied the steel, he
Recked not of the hindrance that across his way was thrown.

Prone in the narrow pathway lay a fainting rag-robed pilgrim—
And a few more strides had ended, for him, life's weary way—
When, from a side path springing, a youthful monk had seized him,
And soon among the heather fringe beside the road he lay.

But so quickly from the greenwood the monk's dark form had darted
That by the rescued pilgrim's side, soon young Sir Hubert fell,
For his mettled steed was frightened, and as from the spot he started,
The knight, with all his prowess, lost his seat and steed as well !

Now, in vengeful, unjust anger, he sprang on Brother Stephen,
And clasped his shoulder fiercely, frowning darkly in his face,

Then stood in silent wonder—and thus, in stature even,
Stood the dark youth and the fair one as the gallants reached the
place.

Then in scornful tone Sir Hubert laughed aloud, and loosed his firm
hold,
Pointed to the silent Stephen, whose calm aspect swelled his rage ;
“ Behold, my friends, a noble ; and once called Lord Ralph of
Thorbold,
He was once my foe in battle, and is now a beggar’s page !

“ Has his valiant sword been broken, and he fears to try another ?
Or is there some love story which this mystery may reveal ?
Faith, I never showed him favour, nay, I never sought to smother
The honest *hate* I bore him, but *contempt* then could not feel.”

Stephen turned him to the pilgrim, and there followed scorn and
laughter,
As he gave him the fresh water he had carried from the fount ;
Then in calm voice to Sir Hubert, “ It is well he ’scaped the slaughter
From your charger, and your conscience has one death-blow less
to count !

“ Hubert, my field of battle is my own heart and its great sin,
And freely do I pardon you for all my wrongs of yore ;
And, for any wrong I caused you, your pardon I would late win—
See, a friend your steed has captured, I would fain this man .
restore ;

“ Pray you call at yonder abbey, on your way, and tell there my need
Of succour from some brother in the vale where runs the brook,
To bear hence a poor sufferer—” but Sir Hubert strode his high
steed,
Departing in his anger, yielding neither word nor look.

One sultry eve in summer, when the laden trees were bending
Still and silent in the twilight, while the dark clouds gathered fast,
Brother Stephen toiled slowly, his wearied footsteps wending,
From the well a fresh draught bringing for the brethren's spare
repast.

Soon the dark clouds rent asunder, and the sudden lightning
glancing
Adown the woodland pathway, scared a steed that came apace,
Then a mighty crash of thunder his terror fresh enhancing,
He dashed madly 'mongst the strong oaks where the thick boughs
interlace.

And thus the knight was wrested from the seat he held so boldly,
With his white face turning upwards to the rain-drops as they fell ;
Brother Stephen knelt beside him, took the hand that thrilled so
coldly,
And prayed, for strength and succour, to the LORD he loved so
well.

Then half-raised the knight—'twas Hubert—till he gently clasped and
drew him
To a bank which there fell steeply, and he stood beneath its brow,
As he drew him o'er his shoulders, while a thrill of joy went through
him,
For he knew his Master's footsteps he was surely following now.

But the abbey hill was rugged, and his burden heavier seemèd,
And twice or thrice he rested, but he dared not lay it down ;
At the doorway stood the Abbot,—“ Son Stephen, I had deemèd
That our strict rule thou hadst broken, but good reason this, I
own.”

Gentle monks applied to Hubert all their skill, and strove to wake
him

From his swoon, until he raised to them his wondering, wandering
eye ;—

Brother Stephen then had vanished, to his cell he did betake him,
And on the stony pavement there in death's repose did lie.

And there the brothers found him, with the red stream stanch'd that
flow'd

From the lips ere death had sealed them, and his last short prayer
was sigh'd ;

But on his brow was calmness, and the peace which CHRIST be-
stow'd

On His soldier who had conquer'd, and who for his foe had died !

Sir Hubert now kneels daily where the holy Stephen sleepeth,

And richly has he dower'd the old abbey with his gold ;

While Angels joy in Heaven as a contrite sinner weepeth,

And many a pilgrim listeth to the tale that here is told.

GIANT RIGHT AND GIANT WRONG.

TWO boys, named Henry and James, lived together as next-door neighbours in a pretty village. They were companions in school and at play, and were very seldom seen apart from each other ; but still they did not always agree in their opinions, or desires ; only in their quiet village life there was little to try their friendship, and James was so ready to give up his own way that they kept on good terms, and little thought of being divided in the future.

James was very fond of reading, when he could get time from school and out-of-doors amusements, and longed to see more of the world he read of. Henry was idle as to reading himself, but would gladly listen to his friend, on winter evenings especially, as he read aloud, or repeated what he had himself enjoyed from some new book or poem.

When the boys were about fourteen years old, their parents told them that they must now go out into the world and provide for themselves ; and that they should go together into the large city, and follow their business in company if they preferred it. They were to have a little money given them to start with, and a few necessaries, but must work out their own way, as their fathers had done before them.

The boys set out with hope and gladness towards the great city they had heard of, but never seen : they knew the distance was great, so they set out in good time one bright spring morning, after having received warnings and encouragements from their parents, who blessed them as they bade farewell.

For some time they walked on eagerly, along a smooth wide road-

way, until they came to a turn in the same, which showed them a sign-post close to them, which pointed in two directions, and they looked at each side in turn, undecided what to do. They saw to the left a wide, pleasant road, which passed through green meadows, fruitful orchards, and rich country, while a beautiful river wound its way alongside of it, upon which there floated different kinds of boats, filled with gay and laughing people. Children ran about in the meadows, or gathered fruits in the orchards, youths and maidens idled the sunny hours away on the river side, and all seemed full of life and enjoyment.

But as the boys looked farther on, they saw that all changed as the eye went on into the distance. The road looked rough and stony, the meadows were changed into wild moor, and sandy desert, the river grew dark and wild, and in the far distance they could see it dashing wildly and angrily against the rocks where stood a grim looking castle, or prison, towering over high black gates of iron, against which the river beat in waves which made a sullen roar return gloomily to their ears. And on the dark river they could see many boats tossing up and down ; the people in them seemed either asleep, or giddy ; some were reaching out their hands to the shore, trying to catch hold of rock or tree to check their mad descent towards the dark pool where the castle stood.

Turning to the right, the boys beheld a very different picture. A steep narrow path ran up the side of a green hill ; then rocky mountains, steep precipices, and dark forests filled the view ; but far, far beyond, on the summit of a mighty mountain, a huge palace shone brightly and calmly against the clear blue sky, its pearly towers gleaming with a silver light, pure and beautiful, as it seemed to smile down upon the little path which led to it. Only a few travellers were in sight, pressing on earnestly and hopefully to the heights above.

Henry gave but a hasty glance to this view ; he turned his face again to the pleasant meadows with an eager smile, but James stood

gazing up towards the silent castle which shone so brightly above them, with a clear bright light glowing in his dark grey eyes.

"Come on, James, we are losing time!" cried Henry, as he turned towards the road leading through the meadows.

"Wait, Henry," answered the other lad, "don't you see the difference in the castles at the end of the roads? Let us read the words on the sign-post."

Henry looked up impatiently, and saw on the board pointing towards the river these words—

"TO GIANT WRONG'S CASTLE,"

and on the other,

"TO GIANT RIGHT'S CASTLE."

"Never mind the *names*!" cried Henry; "no one would choose that horrid way up there; let us run for a boat now some are waiting by the bank!"

"I am not going *that* way," said James, quietly.

His tone was new to Henry, who stared uneasily at his friend, then said crossly,

"Don't be so silly, James; you are never going to be such an idiot as to turn your back on all these nice things!"

"There may be some nice things among the woods and valleys in the mountain country," said James; "anyhow I don't like the look of that headlong river, and the Castle at the end is awful to think of; besides, the name is enough."

"But we needn't go as far as the Castle!" cried Henry; "I shall get out of the boats before I get near the end."

"And what then?" asked James.

"Oh, I don't know; there will be time to think of that."

"The people about this road don't seem to be thinking of anything except pleasure," said James, "and we did not leave home to find only that."

"Oh, it's no use talking," said Henry, "*I* mean to go on the road by the river—for a time, anyway."

"Then promise me not to go on the river, Harry!" cried James, as Henry walked away; "come back soon, and come after me up the hill."

Henry paused, greatly disappointed, he had felt sure that James would follow him when he saw that he was determined to take the pleasant road.

"I expect you will follow *me* soon," he answered; "you will get sick of that climbing before noon!"

And so they parted, each hoping that the other would turn again and follow one road together.

Henry darted down into an orchard, and took as much fruit as he could eat, then joined a group of boys in the meadow, chasing some beautiful butterflies, pelting each other with handfuls of blossoms from the rich grass, and amusing themselves till they were tired. Then some one proposed a row on the river, and Henry agreed, after a moment's thought of James and his warning, intending to get out of the boat before it reached the desert in the distance; but they were so intent on fishing in the water for different objects as they drifted along, that the boat flew on at a much greater speed than they were aware of.

As for James, he turned away with a lonely feeling in his heart. They had never felt separated before, he had never been alone in work or play, and as he gazed up the mountain-side it did look dreary, and very difficult to climb. But in the look and name of the sweet home beyond he felt strengthened to try his best; and as he murmured, "I will not be idle, nor cowardly," he sprang up the bank, and began his task.

As he went on, he was pleased to find sweet flowers and berries hidden among the bushes at his feet, and many new song-birds made sweet music at his side, causing him very pleasant surprise; but he

did not wait long to look or listen ; hastening on with more hope and earnestness, wishing for Henry to be at his side.

A turn of the winding river below had hidden the latter for a time, his friend looked in vain for him, a faint hum of the careless voices rising to him.

Presently he came to a steep rocky bank, almost perpendicular, and a poor feeble woman was looking at it in despair. James gave her his hand, with a ready willingness to help the weak, and springing half way up the bank he stood holding on to a stunted tree, while he drew her up after him, then, leaving her holding on to the tree, he reached the top of the ledge, and reached down to assist her to the same place.

The woman thanked him gratefully, saying that she had been waiting for an hour in hopes of some help, and after having once tried alone, and falling down helplessly, had resolved to wait for assistance. In return for it, she gave James a little book, which contained information as to the road and its dangers, also telling where fresh waters and wholesome fruits might be found on the wayside. James took it gladly, especially as he saw she had more copies for herself and others.

He felt quite strong and happy after this, and was quite taken up with his book, which now warned him of a dark forest near, telling of wild beasts roaming there ; and of instant help if one in danger called earnestly on Giant Right for succour.

Soon after he entered the forest, a large lion appeared in full view, and gave a hungry glare at the traveller ; but James cried out for aid, looking in the direction of the gleaming castle beyond. At the same moment he noticed for the first time a small forest house near him, and springing into it he closed the door, while the lion went on his way with a growl of disappointment.

After a short rest, and also having taken some refreshment, which he found prepared for travellers, according to a notice in the refuge-house,

he went on his way more freely ; but in crossing an open space in the forest he saw a tiger creeping towards him. There was only one tree in the middle of the clear space, and it seemed too far off for him to reach before the tiger should spring upon him, but again calling for Giant Right to help him, he rushed forward, and only just reached it in time to spring up into the branches, safe from his foe. The animal crept under the tree, watching him with savage eyes,—but presently a stag came bounding along, and while the tiger chased after it, James got down from his place, and ran quickly across the clear space near the friendly trees once more. Very soon afterwards he found himself on the open hillside once again, and looked down for Henry.

In the distance, far below, he could see him among others in a little boat which was hurrying down the dark river ; desert sands were on each side now, and Henry was looking hopelessly towards the shore, finding it difficult to keep the boat from dashing against the rocks in the stream, and powerless to bring it near the land. He and his companions seemed to be quarrelling, and accusing each other of something,—James sadly feared that each was blaming the other for their dangerous state ; he tried to get Henry's attention, but his shouts died away in vain. "Even now," thought James, "he might get help from the Silver Castle, if only he would call for it ;" but the book told him it must be *asked* for by the person needing it, except in some special cases ; and he wondered if *his* cries for Henry's sake might be heard before it was too late !

A song of joy sounding on the heights above him drew his attention upwards, where a young lad of his own age was bravely climbing, leading a little brother by the hand. They beckoned to James to come after them, and then as he joined them they told him of their own perils and struggles, and spoke joyfully of the happy home awaiting them.

The little one was tired, and his brother proposed a rest on the

hillside ; James took out his book and read to them for a while, then he went on alone.

Looking up, he saw a small hut built on the very edge of a chasm, a small bridge led across from the spot on to the opposite side of the mighty mountain. He looked in his book for the particulars respecting this spot. It informed him that the hut was occupied by a man who was a dire enemy to Giant Right and his people, and that he did his utmost to prevent any one going on the way to the Castle, therefore all travellers must be on their guard, as he turned many of them back again with false alarms, or delayed them by deceitful arts. As James approached he saw the man come out of the hut and gaze scornfully at him for awhile, then his face changed to a brighter expression as he came near and said lightly,

"Come in and rest awhile, my noble young friend."

"No, thank you, I must hasten on," answered James civilly, but coldly, trying to pass on to the bridge ; but the other stood in his way, and said politely,

"There is no need for hurry, you must rest awhile on this spot, before you try the steeper side beyond."

James again declined, and the man turned to the hut, pointing to the door which stood open, and showed delicious fruits, cakes and wines on a table inside the pretty porch.

"These are prepared for travellers,—come and take as much as you like, and tell me of your adventures," said the man pleasantly.

James thought of the refreshment which he had found ready for him in the forest, and for a moment seemed inclined to accept some here, but remembering the warnings in his book, and feeling a sudden impression that the wines were dangerous drugs to lull him to sleep and idleness, he firmly declined once more, saying he must cross the bridge at once.

"Nay, that shall not be, you ungrateful fellow !" cried the man ;

"is it all you can return me for my kind offers—to hurry on without any friendly talk?"

"I must get on to Giant Right's Castle," said James quietly.

The man grew really angry at this, and said scornfully, "'Giant Right's Castle!' as if *you* could ever reach it!"

"I mean to try," said James, "so let me pass."

He pressed on towards the bridge, but before his foot touched it, the man touched an iron bar at his side, and the bridge fell flat against the side of the chasm below; he laughed loudly at the blank look on the lad's face.

"Now what will you do next?" asked his enemy.

James took a few steps backwards, then, with a cry for help from Giant Right, he sprang across the deep chasm, catching a glimpse of boiling, foaming waters below; the man shrieking aloud as he saw him land safely on the other side, where his feet just managed to reach a projecting stone.

Hard words and stones were flung after him, but he went on joyfully and thankfully, wondering how his friends would manage to cross, but feeling sure that a way would be opened to them also. The mountain air, simple food, and healthy life were giving a rich colour to his cheeks, and a pure light to his grey eyes,—only dimmed when he thought of Henry and his sad, mistaken choice.

When next he turned to look for him, he saw the boat entering the dark rocky passage which led to the Prison; Henry's head was bent down as if he slept, his hands resting idly on the oars, while his companions took no notice of him, nor of the danger they were in. James felt very sad at the sight; he knew that nothing could have prevented Henry from his self-indulgent course, and now nothing seemed likely to save him from the dreadful consequences.

As he toiled slowly and wearily up the rock, feeling almost inclined to turn back, or sleep, he heard a sound of music unlike anything he had heard before,—a song that seemed to sink into his

very soul, and lull, and calm, and soothe it ; and it was even like strengthening medicine, or wine, to his weary nature.

Looking upwards he saw a little angel figure floating over his head, high in the clear air, with wings all tinged with golden light, and rainbow colours very very softly gleaming out from her white raiment, as if reflected on to her and thrown off again in pearly lustre, while in her hands were sprays and clusters of flowers wondrously beautiful, all shining with a glow so soft and pure that James thought he was dreaming of some "fairy-like" wonders.

As he gazed, the child-angel dropped a lily-like blossom at his feet, its silvery gleam brightened the rock it lay upon, and tinted his fingers as he raised it, placing it at his breast, where it gave out a delicious scent, which strengthened him more and more—better than all the fruits and draughts laid out in the enemy's hut.

The child-angel stooped lower, and sang in the thrilling, thrilling tones he loved to hear still :

" Toil on, toil on, nor faint, nor fear ;
Press upwards—see, thy home is near !"

And then she floated gently, beckoning him still, over the silent walls and silver towers of the great castle, now clear to his sight.

He turned once more to see what he could of his friends. Far below, Henry was closer to the dark gates ; the feeble woman was resting in the forest house ; the youth and his little brother had found another bridge across the chasm.

After a short rest, and reading a few sentences from his book, he turned again to climb the last height. He could see happy faces looking over the shining walls, welcoming him so eagerly : a few more shining flowers fell at his feet as a boy-angel flew over his head ; delicious streams of wondrous water appeared flowing down from the rocky mountain side ; sounds of music and song filled his inmost soul with joy and fullest pleasure.

Close to the gates now ! Faint with struggling, almost spent with

his long journey, his feet weary and wounded with the sharp stones ; yet his heart full of joy, and hope, and thankfulness !

Close to the silver city ! the gates almost reached, and the sweet air fanning his heated brow ; and he turned once more to see where Henry was.

Alas ! at that moment the boat was dashed against the heavy gates in the dark gulf, and they flew open. Henry threw his hands high above his head, and the echo of his despairing cry faintly rang among the hills below the spot where James stood. There was nothing but utter blackness and gloom to be seen within the dark gates as they closed again, after unseen hands had drawn Henry within their silent shade.

James cried out in grief and regrets for his friend, and would have fallen to the earth, but a hand raised him on to the next step, and drew him towards the gleaming gates above.

"I am sad and weary ; oh, let me in !" he cried ; and the nearness of the prize again made him feel strong and eager, while a sweet comfort filled his heart, and a voice said in wonderful tones,

"Well done ; enter thou, and be at rest."

The silver gates flung open wide, crowds of happy faces and eager hands met him as he entered ; rippling fountains sent a musical and refreshing sense to his heart, bright gardens, marvellous blossoms, soft green meadows, invited him to gaze and gaze with delight and satisfaction ; and above all the deep peace and perfect rest, as he knew he was safe for ever in the Home that he had won.

And then the wonderful histories he heard within the palace, respecting the journeys of others from other parts of the earth he had left, were delightful to hear ; and the happy waiting for those who were coming after him, and the still happier joy of welcoming them as they reached the mighty gates ! The weak ones receiving strength and full lifelong joy,—no longer anything to spoil the perfect happiness,—no cloud to rest for even a moment on the brightness and joy of this wondrous abode of Giant Right.

SHADOWS.

WITHIN the summer-garden sweet and fair,
I gazed upon its beauty rich and free ;
The scent of roses, lilies, on the air
Hung softly ; glory spread on flow'r and tree
Gladdened the eye ; and child-like forms were there
Dwelling in love and joy and purity,
Joining in bird and brooklet's melody.
And in this home of beauty, peace, and love,
I read the promise of GOD'S rest above.

Within the haunts of wickedness and wrong
I saw the glare of passion, rage, and strife ;
I heard the drunkard's dreadful oath and song ;
Beheld the living-death, the deathful-life !
I saw the angry blow ; and ne'er was heard
A tone of pity, or sweet helpful word :
Hatred, uncleanness, want, and misery !
Of *such* shall Satan's fearful kingdom be.

O friends, which shall we choose for aye—for aye ?
We now must make our choice of friends, or foes ;
Of bliss untold in light of endless day,
Or share the sinner's ceaseless, helpless woes !
Shall all GOD'S joy and beauty be in vain
For you who madly choose the wage of sin ?
Is there not Death within the cup ye drain ?
Will ye refuse Eternal Life to win ?

SOFT CAME THE SUMMER BREEZE.

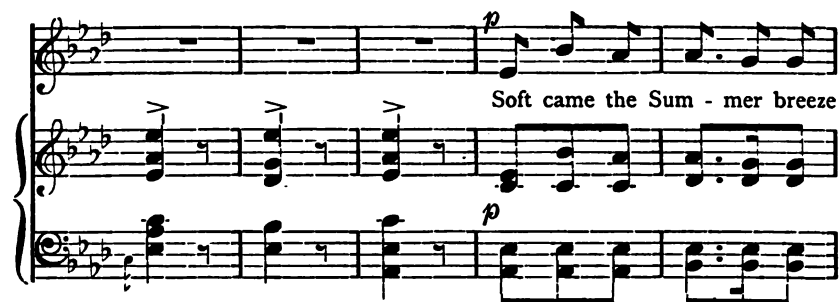
(Dedicated to Thirza P. Thornton.)

WORDS BY
AUGUSTA GOULD.

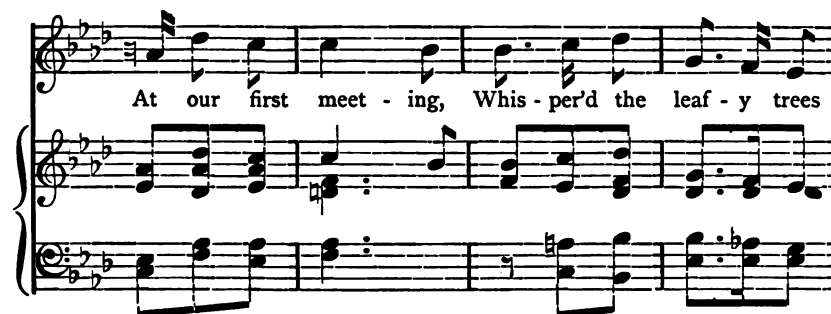
MUSIC BY
REV. E. GOULD.



Piano introduction in 3/8 time, key of B-flat major. The music features a gentle melody in the right hand and a supporting bass line in the left hand. A piano (*p*) dynamic marking is present at the beginning.



First vocal entry. The melody begins with a rest followed by a half note G4, then a quarter note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. The lyrics "Soft came the Sum - mer breeze" are written below the staff. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady eighth-note pattern.



Second vocal entry. The melody continues with a half note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note Bb4. The lyrics "At our first meet - ing, Whis - per'd the leaf - y trees" are written below the staff. The piano accompaniment continues with a steady eighth-note pattern.

SOFT CAME THE SUMMER BREEZE.

87

O'er that sweet greet - ing ; Bright flow' - rets blos - som'd there,

Like our young hopes, so fair. Ah ! but how fleet - -

ing !

p

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The score is divided into four systems. The first system contains the first line of the vocal melody and the corresponding piano accompaniment. The second system contains the second line of the vocal melody and the piano accompaniment. The third system contains the third line of the vocal melody and the piano accompaniment. The fourth system contains the fourth line of the vocal melody and the piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand and a left hand. The right hand plays a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand plays a bass line of eighth and sixteenth notes. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, accidentals, and dynamic markings like *p* (piano).

SOFT CAME THE SUMMER BREEZE.

From the rich Au-tumn bow'rs Com-fort we'd bor-row; Heed-less of

fa-ding flow'rs, Winds whisp'ring sor-row! Till the sad mes-sage came,

cres. *f*

"Part now, to meet a-gain, On some far mor - - - row."

p

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a single-note melody in the left hand. The voice part is a single melodic line. The score is divided into four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The first system starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system continues the melody. The third system includes a crescendo (*cres.*) and a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic. The fourth system ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic.

SOFT CAME THE SUMMER BREEZE.

89

Cold - ly the Win-ter's wind Sigh'd o'er us weep - ing ; On - ly the

stars look'd kind, Si-lent watch keep - ing. Now, till the Cloud-less Day,

'Neath wild waves far a - way, My love is sleep - ing.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score consists of three systems. The first system contains the first two lines of lyrics. The second system contains the next two lines. The third system contains the final line of lyrics. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex harmonic accompaniment in the left hand. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *pp* (pianissimo). The piece concludes with a double bar line.

TO MY FRIEND THIRZA.

AN idle hour when Fancy's power
Steals o'er the soul with dreamy spell,
And flowing rhymes like inward chimes
Float towards the friend I love so well.

Dear friend of mine, that love of thine
Seems doubly precious unto me
Whene'er I think how on the brink
Of death we stand so heedlessly !

Which shall it be—for you or me
To break the bands which hold us here,
And, knowing nought of work or thought,
Or whether farther or more near,

To pass away from earthly clay
And join the spirit world above,
While, yearning o'er the days of yore,
One left behind still clings to Love ?

Whate'er betide still by His side,
We pray to keep us ever fast ;
Together still to do His will,
Together praise His love at last.

TO THE SAME.

IN the bright days of early youth,
Thy friendship true was given to me,
I knew not then in all its truth,
The wealth GOD gave to me in thee !

Each day I knew it better still,
Its priceless worth, unwavering faith,
I know it lives through *all*, and will
Live and love on through life, in death.

And after that, in CHRIST'S sweet rest,
Where clouds and partings ne'er betide,
The bond of friendship He has blest,
Shall bind us closer to His side.

For ours is not a fancy frail,
Made up of lights, and shades, and fears,—
Union in GOD can never fail,
But firmer grows through endless years !

ANCHORED.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee."—*Isa.* xxvi. 3.

YEA, "THOU wilt keep him," LORD, for who but Thou
Can rule the vexing waves of human woe,
And make the spirit-tempest calmly bow
As Thy soft accents lay its proud crest low?

Yea, "Thou wilt KEEP him"—firmly, sweetly hold
With Thy most ready Hand, the soul that clings;
The darker be the way, Thou wilt but fold
More closely round him still Thy shielding Wings.

"In PERFECT peace"—so full, and free, and deep,
For cares and sorrows cannot change Thy Love;
So the still depths of ocean calmly sleep
While storms and billows rage and chafe above.

"In perfect PEACE"—Oh, priceless pearl of Heaven!
Purchased for us by JESU'S precious Blood.
LORD, stay our minds on Thee, to us be given
To win that sweetest gift, "the Peace of GOD."

"Have peace among yourselves," said CHRIST our LORD,
And yet His people wrestle in blind strife!
Oh, for a quiet trusting in His Word,
And Unity in Him, our Peace, our Life.

THE ANSWER.

“Be ready alway to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”

YOU know how dark my past has been,
You know its selfishness and sin,
Not altogether,—none may see
The depth of its deformity !
None but my GOD ; ah ! He can tell
How far from Him my footsteps fell.
You ask me, “ And can Justice bow
To pardon such an one as thou ?
For such a past what must betide ? ”
This all my answer, “ JESUS died.”

You know me vain and weak and frail,
Oh, what can such as I but fail ?
How can such faltering footsteps climb
Through unknown ways, in unknown time ?
How can such nerveless fingers wield
The gospel-armour, sword, and shield ?
What can such past and future be,
But doubt and dread perplexity ?
What word a hope of triumph gives ?
His Word my answer, “ JESUS lives.”

HOLY COMMUNION.

BE still, my soul,
And in low reverent accents let thy voice be heard,
And in thine inmost depths deep thankfulness be stirred.

For thou hast knelt
Before GOD'S Altar, and the Light of Life did come,
And in thy heart, so frail, the GOD-Man made His home.

He bringeth Peace,
And leaveth it His gift to every faithful heart,
Take heed lest, through thy restless passions, He depart.

Once o'er His Cross
The gathering shades of darkness closed, with wings of night,
That, through His clouds of grief, on thee might fall the light.

Now hold Him fast !
By faith and love, and strong entreaty Him constrain
To make thy heart His throne, for ever there to reign.

Abide in Him,
As He in thee, through this most wondrous rite,
And midst the clouds of earth thou shalt have Light.

LIFE BUT A VAPOUR.

THE light sails skimmed o'er the waters blue,
Which danced like the hearts of a merry crew,
As they sped down the lake so fair :
Among them stood the baron's bride,
And his goodly form was at her side ;
They were a noble pair !

The mountains round, like a prison wall,
Reared through the clouds their summits tall,
And the shadows upon them lay :
" They seem to frown," said the fair young wife,
" Like forms on the shore of another life,
Chiding the lake's bright play.

" And they seem to scowl on our light mirth now,
I tremble to look on that sullen brow
That closes the view beyond !"
" Ah ! then look higher yet, sweet love,
Where the cloudless sky shines bright above,
Like an eye all calm and fond.

" As the lake thy life shall glide along,
I'll shield thee with my love so strong,
As the mountains gird us round ;
The shadows shall not fall on thee,
But life shall sparkle joyously
Where true love doth abound !"

The treacherous gale rose swift and strong,
While the mountains echoed yet the song
Of that struggling sinking crew !
The heartless lake again smiled gay,
But the shadows upon the mountains lay,
As they pointed to Heaven's deep blue.

WRESTLING.

O H, faithless heart, be strong,
What if the day be long !
Still it is day.
What if the night should come,
And thou shouldst be called home,
And thou wouldst stay !

Oh, fainting heart, arise !
And heavenward turn thine eyes,
Light dwelleth there.
Strength bountiful is given,
And love and peace from Heaven,
Then lift thy prayer !

Oh, murmuring heart, be still ;
When will thy blinded will
Its clamour cease ?
One Eye is watching thee,
One Heart is loving thee,
One Word gives peace !

SELF.

O H wonderful Tyrant that holds us in thrall,
Oh wearisome despot that binds us so fast !
That leads us, and drives us, and guides us in all,
That fills all our future, and dims all our past !

He clouds all our sorrows, he lowers our joy,
Impairs all our labours, and grasps at our wealth,
In all our best doings we find his alloy .
Creeping over and through all with serpentlike stealth.

We think we have slain him—he rises again !
We yield to his service, obey him once more ;
We see not the fetters he adds to our chain,
But blindly bow down to his sway, as before.

Ah ! well pleased is Satan to see us thus bound
To this deathly body of *Self*, for he knows,
That it drags us and crushes us down to the ground,
And we are ourselves our souls' deadliest foes.

O Thou the true Master, true Friend, and true GOD,
True Light, and true Joy, and true Life, and true Way,
It is only Thy Love that can lighten this load,
For true love of Thee takes all idols away.

Thou strongest of strong ones, come slay the strong man,
And the fire of Thy Love can make powerless his chain ;
Through Thee we may conquer, we will, and we can,
If Thou cast out self-love and bid Thy Love remain !

“ *THERE !* ”

WITHIN the sunny garden sweet and fair,
I saw her standing by the roses white—
The sunbeams dancing on her rippling hair,
Her ringing laughter making all hearts light ;
But lightest *mine*, when she was all my own,
While every hour with love and gladness shone !

Away in icy northland, still, the glow
Of her bright memory warmed my soul anew ;
None whispered to me, “ When the roses go
A voice from Heaven will call thy sweet love too ! ”
How could I live with all life’s sunshine fled ?
How *could* I live when my dear love was dead !

But now a golden dream has brightened every tear—
I saw *her* shining in that happy Home,
I saw the Angels crowding round to hear
Her thrilling song-notes as she bade me “ come,”
And now life’s lonely burden I can bear,
With the sweet hope that I shall see her *there*.

LENT.

S. Mark vi. 31.

COME to a desert place and rest, apart
From all the strife of earthly glare and din ;
Come with thy sin-stained soul and weary heart,
In faithful penitence look o'er thy sin.

The task is sad, but yet 'tis sweeter far
Than all the sickly round of mirth and gain
That in the city's market-places jar,
Filling the hungry heart with want and pain !

Not in blank chill despair we sorrow now,
But with a trembling hope, amid our fears ;
Though 'neath a weary load of sin we bow,
Yet may we smile through penitential tears !

For One before us trod the desert wild,
Fought with, and conquered, all its dreadful powers ;
Making it safe for every trustful child,
E'en in its deepest shades and darkest hours.

To know we oft have sinned, though oft forgiven !
To know how dearly CHRIST our victory won,
This draws us where our LORD Himself hath striven,
To be with Him, in joy and sorrow, one.

Thus may we keep our Lenten watch and fast,
Not trusting our own arms to win us heaven,
But grieving for the sin of all the past,
"Loving Him much," Who hath so "much forgiven !"

SALVATION.

WHAT is it to be saved? To rest
From toil and woe and strife unblest ;
To rise from earthly noise and din
Unfettered by the snares of sin.
To bathe in light and bliss untold,
To see Heaven's Mysteries unfold,
To gaze with full unclouded eye
On wonders of Eternity !

To find no flaw, no fond deceit,
Nought baneful mingling with the sweet,
But full and perfect lasting peace,
And full enjoyment ne'er to cease ;
But something more, yea, more than this,
To crown our high and holy bliss,
Even to gaze through endless days
Upon the light of JESU'S Face !
Yea, *this* salvation's highest bliss,
" For we shall see Him as He is."

ELVA'S TASK.

CHAPTER I.

"And thoughts on thoughts, a countless throng,
Rushed chasing countless thoughts along."

SCOTT.

"**N**OW, Pussy, we mustn't make a noise, because Grandpa's busy thinking."

A little child's happy face was bent over a purring kitten on her lap as she sat on a low seat beside a crackling fire, the light hovering, as if fondly, on the golden wavelets of her hair. 'Grandpa' was a handsome old man, whose snowy head was lowered over his clasped hands, as he sat gazing into the fire before him. He remained silent so long that little Elva's patience died a natural death, and thinking of Nurse's stories in the twilight, she rose, and taking Pussy under her arm, put her sweet baby lips up to her companion's face, whispering, "Good night, dear Grandpa."

"Good night, my darling. Tell Mrs. White not to bring candles until I ring for them."

And so the child left him, "busy thinking ;" a long winding stream of thought bore him back to changing scenes, some in light and some in deep shadow. The fire crackled and blazed away mockingly over the sadder thoughts, and danced the shadow of the dreamer up and down on the wall behind him ; the red glow of the crimson curtains shone warmly about him, but still he sighed deeply from time to time. At last he rose to his feet, and stood with his hand on the bell-handle, but, as if loath to part from his twilight dreams, waited a while, so lost in memory's mazes that he did not hear the door opened

and a quiet step enter the room, just as he spoke his thoughts aloud,—
“Yes, three years ago to-day! just three years ago to-day he left us. Oh, Archie, Archie, I loved you as my own son,—how could you bring so much trouble upon us!”

The next moment the old man had tottered backwards into his chair speechless and trembling, for a deep voice he knew full well answered his words, and a tall, dark young man was bending over him, grasping his trembling hands in hardened toil-worn ones, deeply browned by foreign sun.

“The fault was not nearly all mine, Mr. Howard,” he said quietly; “and you know it, sir.”

“Surely, surely, it is Archie,” murmured the old man vaguely; “do I dream, or has the joyful day come in time for me to see and share it! I see you again after all, Archie, my dear dear boy!”

“Yes, sir,” answered the young man, adding pointedly, “I could not resist the temptation of seeing *you* again, and hearing news of Mabel.”

“How! what do you say? Have you not seen her yet?”

“No.”

“But why? Nor your father either?”

“No, sir, I have come to see you, and no one else.”

Mr. Howard stared blankly at the firelit figure, and then said wonderingly, “We will have candles—I can’t understand—I must see your face clearly, Archie; surely I do not hear you rightly;—come at last—come at last!”

The candles were brought, and the old man gazed long and earnestly into the stern dark face they showed him,—a face marred by long days of want, and grief, and anger.

“You are altered indeed!” he gasped; “tell me all about it, Archie,” he pleaded, as if he were once again inviting the boyish confidence he had won in years gone by. “I never thought I should see your mother’s son wear *that* look on his face! My poor lad!”

Archibald Clayton warmed his hands over the fire for a moment,

and then said lightly, "May I have something to eat, sir? I feel inclined to go and forage in the pantries as I used to do in Mother White's time. Is she reigning still?"

"Yes, yes, of course you shall have something, and then you will tell me everything."

When at last Archie's hunger was satisfied, and they were left alone, Mr. Howard's eager gaze of inquiry sought the young man's face, it grew dark and stern again.

"Well, Mr. Howard, I have been wandering far and wide, existing somehow and somewhere since I saw you; and now I am only in England for two days, and I want to see you privately, and to hear all you can tell me of my sister."

"And never to go away again, Archie, without seeking your father's pardon."

"You forget how very successful I was on the last occasion," was the reply, in a bitter tone; "he never forgives!"

"If so, I am sorry to see his son following his example. But you will go, surely! Think of your sister and of your dear dead mother, Archie! You always did as I asked you, lad; and in the haste and passion of that sad, sad day, you and your father went beyond the limits your sober senses would allow. I think he feels regret; I think he does."

"Has he said so?" asked young Clayton, with repressed eagerness.

"No—not in words, but he is quieter, and—and—"

"Ah, it is only your kind interpretation, sir. No, no—I won't go to him! Why, do you know that my Helen whom he refused to receive, and whom he cursed, yes, *cursed*! my beautiful wife! do you know she died of *starvation*! I could not work, I tried writing in vain; then I got ill myself, and I saw her stitch and teach for me till she fell ill; then the end came for *her*—I wish it had for me!—but I like to remember it was all *his* doing, and though she forgave him, I never can."

Mr. Howard waited silently till the storm of ill feeling had subsided into quiet, listless despair, and then with infinite tenderness and patience he pleaded and persuaded, bringing all the power of "old times" to bear on his old pupil, and at last obtained a promise that he would go to his father and seek for reconciliation.

The story was no new one that had so far ended in three years' estrangement and sorrow. Young Clayton had always been impetuous, the pleasure of the moment ruled his life, but fortunately, owing to his gentle mother and Mr. Howard having great influence over his very affectionate nature, his impulses had been of a harmless character, taking their tone from those he loved so well. His father's hot temper and want of patience with young people's failings had by degrees created a feeling of antagonism and rebellion, but there was no serious outburst until young Clayton disobeyed his injunctions when at college by marrying a poor but very beautiful girl after an acquaintance of only a few weeks. Mr. Clayton had peremptorily forbidden his son to mention the matter to him again after the first refusal of consent, and in the heat of the moment Archie had persuaded the beautiful Helen to leave her home with him; and then trusting to her beauty and grace to prevail, he presented her unexpectedly to his astonished parent's notice as his wife, when Mr. Clayton's wrath knew no bounds; his gentle wife was resting in the village churchyard, no more to quell the rising storms between her angry husband and thoughtless son; while Mabel, the one daughter, was then visiting a neighbour for a few days. So after hot and bitter words young Clayton was bidden to take his bride away, and never to "darken" the parental doors again, and he led his frightened and tearful Helen back to London, there to strive with poverty and suffering, refusing to seek any communication with incensed relatives on either side; some of whom after a few weeks' anger tried in vain to find the young couple, while Mr. Clayton grew sterner and forbade Mabel to mention the name of her dearly loved brother, for whose

return she longed and prayed, and as Archie stood in the old garden pathway that night of his return, and looked up to the lighted window above the porch, she was even then kneeling pure and lilylike in her white night-robe, asking for this. Ah, could he but have seen her then !

But his evil genius was in the ascendant again. Memory brought back another picture,—an idolized form clinging to him, while angry words, and even curses, fell on her as well as on himself. He looked at the study windows, a faint glimmer of light flittered through the chinks of the shutters, and he pictured the stern face bending over the book, and anticipated the angry tones which might hail his return. A moment or two he stood irresolute, then turned away hastily and strode out of the garden, pulling the little sideway gate with an angry clang after him, and so past the peaceful rectory—where old Mr. Howard lay rejoicing over the prodigal's return—and regaining the village inn for a few hours' sleep, he left early the next morning and rejoined the ship on which he worked his way to and from foreign shores, ever nursing anger and grief, and striving to "kill time,"—its pitiless burden of life only a weariness and hopelessness to his solitary disappointed heart.

Mr. Howard was very ill when the housekeeper went to call him the following morning ; the excitement had been too much for his failing strength, but he rallied after an hour or so, and joined little Elva at her breakfast, after which he sat waiting for Mabel Clayton's daily visit, listening for Archie's voice, too, in trembling but joyful expectation of a renewal of old times, when his children, as he called them, cheered his quiet life.

CHAPTER II.

THAT morning Philip Clayton was sitting longer than usual over his breakfast, his stern brows knitted over an unusually interesting matter in his morning paper, which Mabel had cut and folded to his liking as carefully as she always did in her constant attention to all his fancies. Presently he asked her if she had heard the side-gate "bang to" last night.

"Yes, papa. There must have been some one in the garden."

"There *was*, I heard footsteps leaving it. I suspect it was one of your mischievous Sunday scholars, after apples or flowers. If I catch them, they shall smart for it!"

Mabel wondered why her Sunday scholars should be suspected, but wisely refrained from discussing the question. As Mr. Clayton took his second cup of coffee from her he said abruptly,

"Oh, I met Mrs. Macpherson yesterday; she is a confounded busybody, but she had some reason for her interference this time, I think. She actually attacked me on your behalf, and said you were too much shut up, as she calls it, and that you 'only wanted a cloak and grave clothes to make you into a complete Sister of Mercy.'"

Mr. Clayton had a keen dread and dislike of such personages; he regarded them as secret and powerful emissaries direct from Rome; and a hint of losing Mabel in their meshes had really alarmed him. On the occasion of a lady neighbour having her sister staying with her in a Sister of Charity's garb he had experienced the most unquiet sensations, actually pretending not to see the lady advancing lest he should have to bow to her companion. So Mrs. Macpherson's shaft had struck home when she sought to draw Mabel out of the seclusion which her brother's unknown fate rendered welcome to her own tastes.

Mabel laughed lightly, saying merely, "Poor Mrs. Mac! she is in want of a better object for her energy."

But Mr. Clayton was not to be put off, and continued drily ; " That may be, but it has not struck me before that you are too much given to poor people's society and goody books, as she says. You must ask your cousins down here, and you had better accept your aunt's invitations for the future. It is my wish."

Mabel's heart sank. Her father's wish was always law. She knew nothing of her gay London cousins, and had got to love her own quiet country village ; and its claims on her time and energies were not few, now that she had made herself the friend of sick and poor, and as kind sunshine to the little ones whom she loved to teach and gather round her for pleasures and profits mutually enjoyed ; her gentle presence bringing rest and comfort with its quiet but sunny influences.

" How is it *everybody* seems to love her so ?" asked Mrs. Macpherson.

Mabel wondered how her father would put up with her gay cousins' society, and resolved that he should not be inconvenienced on her account, if she could help it, so she quietly but earnestly remarked, " Indeed, papa, I am very happy without more society. I have plenty to amuse and occupy me."

" But it is too simple a style for you, Mabel, you are laughed at, and I blamed for it ! so you must do as I say, and invite your cousins at once."

He turned to the fire with his paper grasped rather angrily, and his daughter felt silenced, so she put on her hat, and went across to the Rectory to pay her daily visit to Mr. Howard, and to tell him of the new plan of life. He had been her mother's friend and guardian, and she had entrusted her children more to his care than to their natural guardian, who was quite willing to be rid of any responsibility, and who respected Mr. Howard with a kindlier liking than he held for any other living creature.

The old Rector was supported by pillows in an easy chair, not feeling so well again when she entered, but his noble face brightened when he greeted his visitor, saying, " I wish I could have come across

to you this morning to congratulate you on your new happiness ; but why is not the truant with you?" then as he saw Mabel's look of surprise and inquiry, he sank back in pale dismay, repeating, "he *surely* came, he *surely* came!"

Mabel took his hand lovingly, saying, "What is it that troubles you so? can I help? tell me!"

"Did no one come to you last night?"

"No one at all," and then as she saw his face grow whiter and more troubled, she put out her hand to ring the bell, but he motioned to her to wait, and presently recovering his self-command, he bade her sit down by his side and listen to his account of the night before. And she listened in grief and wonder, silent tears flowing in keen disappointment; and so she sat for some time after her old friend's voice had ceased. Once she heard him sob and felt his hand tighten its grasp on hers for a moment, and then fall listlessly down, but she did not look up, indulging her grief unmolested. When she did raise her eyes to his face in mute sorrow, she saw that which made her tears stop suddenly, alarm displaced all other feelings as she saw him silently gasping for breath. She rang the bell violently, and just as his faithful housekeeper entered the room, the gentle spirit passed away, and peace settled on the time-worn features.

Mrs. White left Mabel alone with the dead while she sent for the doctor, and gave some orders, and on returning said, in tearful broken sentences, "The child! will *you* go tell her, miss?"

Mabel went to the schoolroom and found the little one waiting for her morning lesson with "dear Grandpapa," which he had always struggled to perform, the little chair placed beside his, and a few books spread out ready. She could not at first understand the loss she had sustained, but after a while she wept passionately, and cried piteously for "Grandpapa."

"I want him back so *very* much, Auntie May!"

Elva always called her friend *Auntie*, by way of loving claim on

her care and interest, "and," she continued, "he might have stopped to say 'good-bye' to me before he went away for always! What shall I do, Auntie May?"

"Get your hat and come home with me, pet, I will take care of you now, at any rate, and we must try to be brave and patient as he would wish us to be, and to meet him again in the happy, happy home he is in now."

"But they will put his body in the dark hole I see sometimes in the churchyard."

"Yes, his body, dear, in our pretty churchyard, but we shall see him again when GOD takes us away to His happy Heaven."

The child put her hand in Mabel's, and moved towards the door.

"Get your hat, little Elva."

"Oh, I forgot!" and sadly the little one went up stairs, giving an awed look towards the door, where she knew her Grandfather was sleeping the still cold sleep she had once seen on an infant in the village.

Elva rejoined Mabel in the schoolroom, and after a glance at the prepared lesson books she quietly collected them and placed them on a shelf; then the quivering little lips gave vent to a wail of grief, and flinging herself down in his chair, she sobbed, "*I want my own dear Grandpa!*"

Mrs. White entered the room just then, and took the child on her knee.

"We shall all want him, my lamb! and for many a long day too! But now you are going to be his brave little lassie, and you'll be so happy with your Auntie May, for she says she will take you home for a bit."

In the hall they met the good old village doctor. He took Mabel's hand in his and said, "You have lost a rare friend, poor child! and what a beautiful life is ended now; I always felt a wholesome refreshment after any time in his company."

After a few words to little Elva he went away, and Mabel took the child to Fir Lodge. She was informed that Mr. Clayton had given orders that he was not to be disturbed, and had retired to his study an hour since. It was a hard day for Mabel ; little Elva's grief was keen and deep, and Mabel knew well how great the blank must be to herself, now that her one adviser and sympathizer had gone. And midst all the grief at their loss, the bitter thought of Archie's second departure came constantly and painfully to her mind. But a child's grief is never long-lived, and in a few weeks Elva was bright and merry, for the most part. Mr. Howard's will had consigned her appealingly to Mabel's care, and Mr. Clayton approved at once. A young Rector came to the living, receiving but a cold welcome, clouded by regrets over his predecessor's death, comparisons ever ready to arise.

Six days had passed away, the flowers which Mabel and Ella had planted on Mr. Howard's grave were blooming freely, and Fir Grove life had gone on as uneventfully as could be, Mr. Clayton remarking that Mr. Howard's death had put aside other plans of life, when one day he astonished Mabel by bidding her prepare for a visit to some places of interest on the Continent, and Elva was to accompany them. Two months later they returned again refreshed by the change, and in driving through the village, many a glad face welcomed Mabel home again ; Mrs. White standing at the door of a cottage provided for her by her late master, shed tears of joy, "to see her 'little lamb' brought safely back from dangerous travels," and declared to her neighbours that "Miss Clayton didn't seem spoiled a bit by them foreigners, and *must* have had something to eat besides French frogs, to look as she did ;" for the doctor's merry son, aged 14, had solemnly assured her that frogs were the staple food of the French people, and that Miss Clayton would probably require a pondful on her return.

CHAPTER III.

MR. and Mrs. Macpherson were seated at lunch in their comfortable villa called "Mon Repos." Mrs. M. had hit upon the name as very sweet and appropriate for their last days to pass under. There were some people who ventured to doubt whether the lady ever rested herself, or allowed her spouse to do so,—but that was not their business. Mr. Macpherson had risked first a little deprecatory cough when she proposed the name, and then seeing her eyes fixed on him in an inquiring manner, had stammered out his "idea that *perhaps* the tradespeople or postman might find it difficult to catch, or pronounce," but his wife had promptly reminded him that when he happened to have "an idea," it was generally deficient in sense or reason, and that the tradespeople must *learn* to pronounce it. So, as he had learned to submit, he said no more; only a faint, faint gleam of something like triumph lighted his face when their greengrocer ordered his boy in their presence to take their purchases round to "*Monn Reposs*," whereupon Mrs. Mac, as she was popularly called, gave him a short lesson in the proper pronunciation, which was smilingly, but doubtfully endured by the tradesman until after her departure, when he expressed something only a little beyond Mr. Macpherson's ideas on the subject, adding, "If folks lives in Hengland why do they want parley-voo names on their gates?" Mrs. Macpherson met the boy returning, and administered a short French lesson at once, which sent the lad grinning into his master's presence, whereupon he got his ears boxed for making fun of customers. Then Mr. Best, greengrocer, felt relieved and happier.

But to return to "Mon Repos" and the lunch table.

"My dear," said Mrs. Macpherson, whereupon Mr. M. gazed attentively and seriously into her face, "I shall go to call on Mabel Clayton this afternoon. I hope this foreign tour has been a nice

break for her, and taken some of the rust off. I must give her a little advice now as to keeping up the effect of the change. Mr. Clayton looks as if he thought me very officious and impertinent, but she must not be allowed to return to her old fusty ways."

Mr. Macpherson happened to have some nearly sound ideas as to Mabel's "ways" and his wife's regulating propensities, but he dared not produce them, so he only said, "I dare say she will be very pleased to see you, my dear,—she is an exceedingly amiable girl, exceedingly so."

"And as to Elva," resumed his wife, "she is a nice child, though too much petted ; I must give Mabel some hints about management of children. Now you may order the pony-carriage for me, and just look after that garden boy a little,—don't go to sleep, or he will be in the orchard eating all the fruit."

The lady departed, and her husband planted his weary little body in a very uncomfortable high chair by the window, where he could not sleep, if inclined to, and kept a dutiful, but mild eye fixed on the garden boy weeding the paths.

That latter named sprig of humanity saw his mistress depart safely out of sight, and then looked musingly up to the window. He saw Mr. Macpherson's eyes upon him, but he trembled not, he saw them close once or twice, for Mr. M. had been dragged a long 'round' that morning by the energetic partner of his hearth and home, and at last the boy came boldly up to the window and said,

"Please, sir, may I run round to see how father is? he's poorly to-day."

Mr. Macpherson considered deeply for awhile,—"*What would she say?* But then if the poor boy was anxious about his father ; and—and,"—he never liked to refuse any one anything,—that was why Mrs. M. wisely carried the purse,—and above all, it was pleasant to feel *master* for once! so he replied with an air of weak importance, "Yes, Thomas,—for ten minutes only, Thomas."

"I am not afraid of either fever or rudeness," she said with a rather weary smile, while her head throbbed painfully.

"Well," said her visitor, patronizingly, "I do think that any one would find it difficult to be rude to a little piece of honeysuckle like you ; but I wish you would come out of your narrow lane sometimes. And I can fancy how Mr. Clayton kept you veiled and guarded on your tour!"

"Papa is always indulgent to me, Mrs. Macpherson ; I cannot bear it to be thought that he is otherwise, as it is *not* the case," said Mabel earnestly. "And," she added, "*he* wishes me to have more society now, I am sorry to say,—when I feel ready for it."

"Really!" cried Mrs. Mac triumphantly, "you have *me* to thank for that. I am very glad my lecture took effect. Well, I must talk to you about Elva some other day,—your head is bad, I see. Come and see me soon."

Then she departed as abruptly as she entered, and Elva returned to the sofa, resting a loving little face on Mabel's shoulder with quiet sympathy, and some relief at the departure.

"Tea is coming in soon," she whispered, "let me pour it out and bring you some."

"Why does she scold you?" asked Elva later on ; "she opens her mouth so wide, and holds out her hands so,—and I don't think she is very nice, Auntie Mabel."

"She means to be very kind, darling,—*try* to like her."

"Well, I will, if you say so. I wish everybody was kind and gentle like you are. I heard Betty Briggs say one day that you could take the sour out of vinegar if you smiled at it. I don't know quite what she meant, only that you were *very, very* nice."

"It was a foolish speech of Betty's, and she didn't mean you to repeat it, dearie."

"Didn't she? well, I'm sorry then. But now I'm going to water your flowers in the window-seat. I can see the gentleman who lives

in Grandpa's house now, he has just passed the gate, and now he is picking up a letter that Mr. Clayton has just dropped out of his pocket, and he is giving it to him. I wonder why Mr. Clayton looks so angry ; and he won't stop and speak to the new clergyman ! The clergyman is going after him, but he won't stop."

"How do you know who the gentleman is, Elva?"

"Ellen told me when he passed this morning, and she says he is good and kind, and everybody likes him."

Mr. Clayton came in soon afterwards for some tea.

"Papa, is Elva right? she says you were with the new Rector just now."

"He gave me a letter which I had dropped,—yes, it was he."

"Have you seen anything of him, papa?"

"No,—you seem curious about him."

"I am so glad to hear that he is liked ; I was afraid the people were prejudiced against a stranger."

"Who told you he was liked?"

"Ellen said so."

"Humph,—Ellen is an authority, I suppose!"

"He will be calling soon, I fancy," said Mabel, interested in Mr. Howard's successor and his work.

"I suppose he will *not* !" cried her father ; and then to Mabel's astonishment he hastily left the room, not noticing little Elva, who stood holding out a cup of tea.

"Put it down, darling ; and you will be a good, quiet little woman when Mr. Clayton comes back, he won't want us to talk just now."

Her father returned after awhile, but hid himself behind a newspaper in silence, little angry twitches of the same now and then betraying an uneasy spirit behind its columns ; while Mabel pondered and wondered over the cause of his anger.

CHAPTER IV.

"REALLY, Sir Robert, I am delighted to see you ! What a long time you have been away !"

"Yes, Mrs. Macpherson, I have been a great wanderer. I am such an unquiet sort of fellow, and I cannot say that I have any affection for this corner of mother earth. I believe I see the same faces, looking just the same, the same carriage-wheel marks, even the same *bonnets* every time I return !"

"Yes, it is quiet. Are you staying at the Park with your mother ? I hope she is well ?"

"Oh, she's never well, you know—or fancies she isn't. One might as well be in a monastery as in these quarters,—and all the people seem to be as horribly good as monks were supposed to be."

"Yes, you are fond of the naughty world, you see."

"Yes—and no,—one gets tired of everything,—but there is some pleasure in hunting for something new, and disappointment is better than escaping it in a monastery."

"Well, I want to introduce you to something '*new*' to-night—a young lady who is *not* spoiled."

"Oh spare me, if it is one of your 'bread-and-butter misses'—"

Whereupon Mrs. Macpherson gave him an outline of Mabel's history from *her* point of view. Sir Robert was partly interested, and said,

"What an old Blue-beard her father must be ! I think I remember a little girl in white frocks coming to see my mother, with Mr. Clayton."

"There, that is the young lady I spoke of,—laughing over poor Miss Titsey's droll remarks, I can see ; ah, now she has turned to the piano."

Mabel's attention had been attracted by a well-played melody. She

stood now intently listening, one small perfect hand resting on the instrument.

Sir Robert had seen many beautiful faces,—more than one ready to become his property! But as his eyes rested on Mabel Clayton a purer, softer light shone in them, as he felt the power of purity and sweetness as he had never done before.

"How very *sweet*," he murmured involuntarily, and then as the piece ended, he begged eagerly for an introduction. Mrs. Macpherson smiled archly at him, at which he coloured somewhat and said, "Anything '*new*,' you know."

"Mabel, let me introduce Sir Robert Pailey. Sir Robert, this is a special *protégée* of mine—Miss Clayton.—I have been telling Sir Robert what an inveterate little recluse you have been, and he agrees with me that it is time you came out of your shell."

Mabel raised her eyes to see what the new judge of her actions might be like; there was no answering expression of admiration in hers as she met the full gaze bent upon her from his dark bright ones.

Sir Robert was a handsome, healthy looking man, a certain air of self-satisfaction about him, and rather a hard voice; on the whole, he was very popular, and he was content to be so while *self* was in no wise cramped or thwarted as the price of it.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Macpherson, I was speaking of myself when we discussed seclusion, or the reverse; whatever line Miss Clayton may have taken it evidently has left nothing to be desired towards the effect on the person concerned. But perhaps you will give us your recipe for making seclusion so very beneficial, and my world perhaps more profitable?"

"You would scarcely follow it, Sir Robert; and I hardly know of what your world consists."

"Well, let me see—races, balls, hunting, theatres, pretty faces to look at, &c. &c. Now don't you think I am a very wicked man?"

But *you* have changed your views a little, I hear. You have been travelling, and now you are actually at an evening party!"

His tone grated painfully on Mabel's taste, and Mrs. Macpherson answered, "She has not changed it; if it had not been for me she would still have been a close prisoner; but I attacked her father."

"Is your father so strict a gaoler?" asked Sir Robert.

"No," said gently, but with an indignant flush in her cheek, and a look in her eyes which warned her companions of dangerous ground as she turned from them and looked over some music near.

Mrs. Macpherson laughed lightly, and left them; the baronet gnawed his moustache impatiently, and presently stood again by her side.

"You must pardon me," he said humbly, "I was led to believe—that is—"

"You were *mistaken*," said Mabel quietly, but pointedly; "say no more, please, about it."

"Oh, by-the-bye," he remarked, after a pause, "where is your good-looking brother now? I used to know him; he was a nice fellow—so merry and good-natured; I hope he is well?"

Then he noticed with surprise her crimsoned cheeks and tearful eyes, and without waiting for her answer he turned wonderingly to the pile of music, asking her to sing; and while he turned over song after song, Mabel had a hard struggle for composure, wondering if she could go on with "society" if this was the kind of experience to be endured.

By a strong effort she nerved herself to sing a sweet wild melody which thrilled through the room, riveting all attention, and as she moved from the instrument Sir Robert showered compliments upon her, Mrs. Mac gave her an approving nod and smile, and informed her nearest neighbour that all were indebted to her own efforts for such a treat, as *she* had been successful in emancipating the sweet singer.

As Sir Robert hung devotedly over Mabel's chair, Mrs. Macpherson gave her a meaning and encouraging smile, which had the effect of adding to Mabel's weariness and dislike with regard to his fulsome compliments. She was just meditating an escape to little neglected Miss Titsey's side again, when all attention was attracted by the entrance of the young Rector. He made apologies to Mrs. Macpherson for his late appearance, but she replied with a searching glance in his face, "I don't think I'll forgive you, you promised to be here early—I hope nothing unpleasant detained you?"

"Yes, it was a case of sudden illness, and I was sent for."

"Oh, indeed,—none of our *friends*, though? They are all here to-night. Who is it, may I ask?"

"It was my old friend Bentley."

"Now, really, Mr. Erlton! this *is* adding insult to injury! Depriving us of your society, and then exciting my curiosity painfully over that old tramp!"

A grieved look settled for a moment on the young man's face as he looked into hers. He made no reply, and she seemed half ashamed of her words, and then laughingly remarking on "poor pets," she asked Mabel to sing once more. Sir Robert, with impressive politeness, escorted her to the piano, and stood near, while people lifted their eyebrows, and looked convinced of his captivation at first sight.

When the clear thrilling notes had ceased, Mr. Erlton inquired the young lady's name, of his hostess.

"Mabel Clayton,—a special *protégée* of mine; shall I introduce you?"

The introduction was made, and Mrs. Macpherson engaged the unwilling Sir Robert in conversation.

The Rector took a seat by Mabel's side, and his presence seemed to impart a peculiarly soothing and wholesome charm after her late companion's uncongenial style.

"I suppose you are tired of answering questions as to your tour,

Miss Clayton," he said, in most musical tones, "but I hope you enjoyed it very much?"

"I believe yours is only the third or fourth time of asking," laughed Mabel,—a sort of joyous relief over her in contemplating Sir Robert's back only,—"which says little perhaps for the general interest in my doings. Yes, I enjoyed it all immensely, my first foreign trip."

"Indeed! Then I can fancy the delight of it. My last wanderings, on the Bosphorus, were very charming."

They drifted into pleasant talk, until he said, "I fear, from all I have heard, that you must miss my good predecessor very keenly; I met him once some years ago when *I* was at college. Another old friend of yours has been attacked fatally, I think, to-night—Bentley; he spoke a great deal of you, and is hoping he will see you before he dies."

"Poor old man, I will certainly see him to-morrow, if possible."

But, alas, Mrs. Macpherson had heard the closing words, and swooped down upon the pair.

"Now, Mr. Erlton, you really must not frustrate all my plans, and entice Miss Clayton into your parochial charity net again! just as I had hopes of her turning over a new leaf, too!"

"I was quite unaware of your exertions for Miss Clayton's improvement," he said, smiling mischievously the while. "I beg pardon,—and shall I tell Bentley to-morrow, Miss Clayton, that you cannot come?"

"Oh, it is no good now; you have given her the idea, and nothing but her father's veto will stop her from going to see the old creature—an angry old man he is too! I went to see him once about his donkey coming into my garden, and he positively called me names! He said I was 'a regular Cantarab the eighth;' if you know what he meant by that, *I* don't."

The Rector's ringing, liquid laugh, led the chorus of amusement in which Mrs. Macpherson herself joined, in spite of herself, and her

diminutive spouse was looking dangerously convulsed in secret for a time, and then seemed to be pondering on Bentley's temerity.

"*Very* rash old man," he murmured to Miss Titsey, "an *exceedingly* rash old man!"

"He is very eccentric," pleaded Mabel, "and has had so much trouble to bear alone; but really there is a good deal of nice feeling in him."

"Yes, to *your* rose-coloured spectacles," said Mrs. Macpherson, "and I believe you *like* hunting up such unpleasant old curiosities, Mabel."

Sir Robert averred that Bentley was a fortunate man to excite such interest, and managed to plant himself between Mabel and the Rector, when a servant relieved her by announcing her carriage; and being led thereto by Sir Robert,—who pushed poor little Mr. Mac aside as his wife pushed him forward,—he bade her good night with much less of the patronizing element in his manner than when he had first greeted her.

It had been a stiff, unpleasant evening, and Mabel's cheeks were paler than usual as she wished her father good night. She went to Elva's bedside to refresh herself with the sight of the lovely little sleeper, to whom as yet love and innocence were the only fields to tread; and Mabel knelt beside her, thinking more passionately than usual of Archie wandering about the world. "Was his world like Sir Robert Pailey's—and the effect the same on him?"

At breakfast next morning Mr. Clayton inquired as to the people present at the gathering of the night before, and Mabel repeated the names.

"Ah," he said, "Sir Robert was there, was he? I hear that he is grown up very wildly,—and—and you say the Rector was there?"

"Yes, he came in very late, though."

"Oh, well, look here, Mabel—I have given up my seat in the old church. In future I shall either go over to B—— or stay at home.

You and Elva can do as you please, but I beg that you will have as little intercourse with the Rector as possible ; *I* shall have *none*."

Mabel's look of pained surprise did not escape his notice, he seemed about to speak, and hesitated, nervously crumpling a letter in his hand, then said half angrily, "If you do not know my reasons, all the better, but remember, I am determined *not* to be annoyed !" and so he left the room.

Mabel was partially relieved by the fact that at least he had not forbidden her and Elva to continue their attendance at the old church they had known and loved as long as they could remember pleasant Sundays and best friends.

CHAPTER V.

"**A**RE you going out this morning, my own dear auntie?" cried little Elva, hopping on to the terrace before the breakfast-room, where Mabel was hanging up her pet bullfinch in the bright sunlight, and answering his brisk pipings of delight.

"Yes, sweetling,—and you, too, if you like. You can play in poor old Bentley's garden while I go in to see him,—he is very ill."

"But he is a *very* cross old man, Ellen says."

"No, darling, not now ; and you can take him some flowers to please him ; he loves them always."

A woman in charge now was standing at Bentley's door as Mabel entered the little garden, once the pride and delight of "the village bear"—according to Bentley's popular *sobriquet*.

She welcomed Mabel respectfully, and led her to the bedside, whispering, "Master Bentley, she be come to see you, sure enough."

"I told you so," he answered ; "I knowed *she* wouldn't put it off long ; and when you said she had lots of ladies and gentlemen to see

first, and to tell all about them furreners, *I* knowed what *she'd* do, all the same—I did."

Mabel took the hard brown hand which lay on the coverlet—a warm one she had given him last winter—and said how sorry she was to see him so ill.

"Needn't be sorry, miss. Old Bentley's worked out, and only in the way o' better folks. But I did want to see you, just to say how downright sorry I am that I was so *onceevil* to you that first day you came. I thought you was one o' them interfering folks as come and ask all kinds o' bothersome questions and then gives you a *track*, and goes off to laugh at you. Surely I *have* been onceevil to them too. There's that tall one with the *smalley* husband, she comes and she says, 'What ever do you pile all them oyster-shells there for,' says she, 'in such a ridiculous manner?' says she. So I only says, 'For *fools* to look at, surely,' and she went off, till she caught my donkey straying one day by accident, and when she came again and let on to me at 'nineteen to the dozen,' with her little man shaking behind her, I spoke up again, I did so! But I'm sorry now that all my multitude of sorrows had made me cross and impatient, and I know better now, and the LORD will forgive me. And you see the oyster-shells were what my last little lad had gathered and set store by. They're all in the churchyard now, the lads I mean, by their mother's side; I am content to join 'em; and the new Rector he have done me a power o' good, and made me feel peaceful and happy at last; and I'm just like a tired bairn now, and so good-bye, and GOD bless you for all."

Tears came choking his feeble utterance, and Mabel sat quietly, holding his hand in hers, till she saw he had recovered his self-control, then with kindly words and a simple hymn sung to his great enjoyment in her soft clear tones—for Bentley loved flowers and music keenly—she took little Elva to his side to make her gift, and then left the lonely cottage where death soon entered lovingly.

As Elva saw her friend's eyes so tearful she whispered, "Is he going to Heaven?"

"I hope so, pet."

"Then he'll see Grandpa. May I send my love to him?"

Without waiting for an answer, she ran to his side, and urged her request.

"Ay, ay, little lassie, if I *see* him; but it ain't likely I'll be set near *him*; I'll be lower down a good bit, and I'll not like to go limping up to him far. But I'll see, my beauty, and may be *send* your message, anyway."

"Oh, but you won't be *limping*, Mr. Bentley! you'll be well and—and—everything will be happy and nice."

He repeated the child's words till slumber seized him, from which he never roused.

As they passed the rectory, Mr. Erlton was standing at the gate. He met little Elva's steps, and took her hand, as he said good morning to Mabel, who, remembering her father's strange injunction, would have hurried on, but Elva prevented it by stopping before the gate and looking wistfully inside, saying, "I *want* to go into Grandpa's house again; do let me for a little while: I don't like any one to live in Grandpa's house except him."

"Will you come and live with me?" he said, laughingly.

The child considered seriously, and then her face lightened up, and she cried, "Oh, how nice it would be! But you must let Auntie Mabel come too? I think that would be very nice!"

"But what would Mr. Clayton do?" asked the Rector, with mock gravity. "He would not spare your auntie."

"Oh, then I can't come," said the child, resignedly.

"But will you like now to see my flowers and birds?"

"Yes, oh, so much! Come, too, Auntie Mabel."

"I must go home, pet. Don't you hinder Mr. Erlton too long. I will send Ellen for you in five minutes."

"I will bring 'the lamb' home—as Mrs. White calls her," he said.

"And then you can come in and see *my* garden," cried Elva.

"No, I think not," he hastily answered, "I must wait for that treat, Elva."

And Mabel went home alone.

"Where is Elva?" asked her father.

"At the rectory, for a few minutes. I could not help it, papa, without being rude. The Rector will bring her home in a few minutes."

"*Here!* You didn't ask him here?"

"No, papa, he won't come in—but it is difficult—I—"

Mr. Clayton paced the room rapidly, and then said bitterly,

"Mabel, that man's family upset all our happiness! His sister is Archie's wife. I will *never* give my hand in friendship to an Erlton. I do not wish *you* to avoid him altogether,—it would be inconvenient and uncomfortable in society, but I warn you that he must never cross my path if he wishes for secrecy as to our relations."

"But, papa—"

"*Don't* tell me!" he fumed, "they were all concerned in it,—no doubt about it. Say no more, I will *not* hear."

Mabel watched awhile at the window for Elva's return; she came dancing along, holding her new friend's hand, and carrying a basket of roses and grapes. He stooped to kiss her twice at the gate, and, opening it for her, stood outside. The child seemed to be urging him to enter, but he shook his head, and turned away; his tall, erect figure and bowed head striking Mabel as very comely and graceful to behold, and she remembered the calm, high-souled expression in his deep grey eyes, which melted into blue depths of love when he spoke to little Elva. Could *he* be unworthily concerned in Archie's mistake? and her soul answered, *No!*

"Oh, he is so nice, and these are roses from my own little garden," said Elva in ecstasies; "Mrs. White told him, and he said it was

to be kept nice, she says so ; and these are some grapes for you from Grandpa's greenhouse."

Mabel heard of all the rectory pleasures before her father's return, and kept clear of them at luncheon, when Mr. Clayton sat stern and silent, in fear of childish revelations of the morning visit. Mabel was prepared to check them by rival topics of interest in store for Elva.

By that evening's post a letter was despatched to her cousins, by Mr. Clayton's firm request, inviting them to spend a few weeks at Fir Lodge ; the invitation was accepted, and in the course of a week two fashionably dressed young ladies appeared, much to Mrs. Macpherson's satisfaction.

Mr. Clayton received them with polite civility, and after inquiring how their mother was, he consigned them to Mabel's care and attention, as if he had accomplished all that could be expected of him ; and Amy and Helen Rogers turned their attention to the cousin they had not seen since mutual childhood.

Amy, the elder, was disposed to show her gracious tolerance to Mabel as a convenient country cousin just now,—she needed change ; but Helen, after a few moments, yielded herself warmly to Mabel's kindly greetings, and sank into one of the armchairs drawn near the autumn fire with a sigh of relief, as she said,

"Oh, it all looks so fresh, and home-like,—it is a treat after London smoke and noise !"

"Now, Helen, don't get into the clouds and ecstasies at once!" cried Amy, "you always go on like an East-end arab out for a day in the country. Yes, I will take some tea, child, thanks,—and, Helen, give me that hand-screen, please, you are only playing with it, while my cheeks are suffering."

And then with self-possessed care, Miss Rogers made herself comfortable, in her own fashion, in the centre of the fireplace, and sipped her tea as she gazed absently into the fire through a pretty painted

transparent hand-screen; for one of Mabel's fancies was never to *hide* the fire, if it were a little too warm in its comfort.

From her seat at the tea-table she viewed her cousins, and saw in Amy a brilliantly pretty face, wavy chesnut hair, lips rather too thin, a discontented droop at the corners when the face was at rest, a tall slim figure, and a lazy tone of voice. Helen was almost a brunette, with a small but perfect figure, and eyes whose depths you could not fathom, lustrous and almond-shaped, under long lashes.

CHAPTER VI.

"**W**HO would like a drive this bright morning? or would the idea of a walk be pleasanter?" asked Mabel as she entered the breakfast-room, the morning after the cousins' arrival.

"Oh, a drive, please!" cried Amy quickly. "Mamma says I have no consideration for the horses; I always drive when I am not obliged to walk."

"Have you no choice in the matter, *belle cousine*?" Helen asked, linking her arm in Mabel's.

"No, thanks—I must take a little walk on my own account this afternoon, if you will excuse my leaving you for once; so, Elva, you may run and order the carriage for this morning."

"Well," said Amy lazily, as she teased the cat with her dainty slipper tapping its tail, "could not the drive serve your business too? we could go wherever you like, you know," she added condescendingly.

"Yes, do let us be just like sisters, Mabel," said Helen, "we have been stranger-cousins long enough,—so *avaunt* ceremony!" laughed she, tossing Elva in her arms.

"Helen is getting sentimental, I can see," drawled Amy, "but it will die a natural death in town, fortunately!"

"Heigho!" she yawned, as Mabel left the room, "this will be a dull visit, I prophesy; only I *must* get my complexion a little brighter before I go back, so I suppose one must bear it for awhile; and when my cheeks suit my mind again, mamma must find she is dull without us. I thought I should have died of ennui last night,—not a soul came in, and only a wrinkled brow overtopping a newspaper by way of a representation of the sex I love best! And you pretending to be interested by our mild cousin. Elva isn't naughty enough to be interesting, and Uncle Philip—oh, the punishment it is to endure his society! I long to pop his eternal newspaper on the fire, and then ask him to play 'going out of church' with it!"

Helen laughed a moment at the thought, and then she said earnestly, "Amy, Mabel does me good *all round*, she is refreshing after our London whirl of late; and I don't know any one who is so sweetly pretty to look at."

"Oh! you always rave over any 'pretty face. For my part, I like a looking-glass view of my own as well as any! And I believe that if mamma didn't insist on your going into society, you would live among books and paintings. Fancy your dreaming of declining Lady Radcliffe's party the other night,—such a first-rate class as she moves in!"

"Indeed I dislike her crowded rooms; you never move off one pattern of the carpet, and the gentlemen might as well look for a natural laugh from her, as for a chair to rest their weary limbs. But I hear the carriage coming round, and we are not ready."

Amy was very particular over each detail of her attire, while protesting that "there would be no one to see them in these wilds,"—but in spite of Helen's reminders that Mabel was waiting in the garden the London belle spent several impatient minutes over a refractory veil. "Oh, never mind," she said languidly, "if the horses are as

quiet as their owners, they will prefer standing still, and Mabel can feel extra virtuous while waiting for us patiently. I think I will not wear the veil, there isn't wind enough to hurt this morning."

But sundry other difficulties presented themselves before she was "got up" to her own satisfaction. Dressing was always a long study, and listless experiments were tried in varying a style, and Helen had joined Mabel in the garden fully ten minutes before her sister appeared; then Elva had departed for a race with her dog, and had to be called and waited for, whereat Amy fumed slightly, whining out,

"I do hate waiting for people,—children always do run off just when they are wanted. *Now*, Helen, don't put on that hateful smile! you should have stayed to help me dress; you know I can't manage alone, and mamma won't afford me a maid of any use to *me*."

It was strange the sisters should not have any tastes in common; brought up in the same atmosphere of pleasure-seeking, only, Amy's ambition was to reign as a Queen of Society, to win complete allegiance from men, and envy from women, while Helen, generally reserved, and content to be unobserved, gave a certain tolerance and consideration to her sister's foibles, receiving in return a fair amount of ridicule for what Amy termed her eccentricities. In reality Helen often yearned for wider and nobler action, and looked forward to Amy's probable marriage as a chance of her own emancipation from a butterfly life; and hitherto those people comprising Mrs. Rogers' "set" had not cared to sound the depths of Helen's nature and sweet character, thorough, earnest, and true as it was; ready, but patiently waiting, to throw itself into active love and labour in any good and noble cause. "The truth and nothing but the truth," shone out from those dark eyes, well-like in their depths,—like truth's dwelling place.

Mrs. Macpherson was at her garden gate when the girls were passing; she signed to the coachman to stop, and came forward for an introduction, while Amy said under her breath, "What a country

hop-pole!" but declared favourably towards her as they departed, for a list of amusements on their behalf had been rapidly run through.

"Look!" cried Elva, soon afterwards, "there is a horse in the lane kicking so,—and now, see, it has run away with the gentleman on it!"

The rider was Sir Robert Pailey, who dashed by them as she spoke, giving one glance at the occupants of the carriage, and then striving to check his steed, which was not easy to do.

Meanwhile Amy cried out in pleasure and excitement for once, "Why, that is Sir Robert! I wonder how he comes here! he said he *never* came,—can he have heard of *our* visit, do you think, Helen? Ah, here he comes,—what a windfall in the shape of a man!"

Mabel looked rather puzzled, Elva declared innocently that the man had not fallen.

Sir Robert returned, greeting Mabel eagerly, and then lightly addressing himself to Amy. "Miss Rogers, too? Fortune has a mind to give me double pleasure this morning. I have been trying a new horse," he added, "I have had such a battle with him, as he has not learned to know his master."

"I can imagine that," laughed Amy, "had his acquaintance been completed, he would not dream of having any will of his own. But what brings you to these regions?"

"Dutiful accordance with my *mamma's* wishes!"

"Oh, indeed, will duty keep you long here?"

"Something or other has kept me much longer than I intended; by the way, Miss Clayton, I thought of bringing my mother to see you this afternoon, shall you be at home?"

"Yes, after four o'clock," answered Mabel, "it *is* a rare pleasure to see her out of doors, and shows, I hope, that she is better just now?"

"Oh, she fancies she is worse than she is," he answered, "I believe she hunts up new ailments daily, as a hobby! It is needless to ask

how *you* are, Miss Rogers! London has sent some roses into the country for once! and you, Miss Helen, have you not forgiven me yet? you seem to admire the view very much on that side of the carriage!"

"I have forgotten what your offence was," answered Helen, rather indifferently. "Oh, now I remember,—yes, you spoiled my album with some lines, uninvited; but it did not turn out a success any way, so I gave it up."

"I shall be careful how I meddle again with pet albums," he said, ruefully, "how angry you were!"

Helen was saved from further reply by the restiveness of the horse, and they bowed their adieux, Amy bidding him take care of such a 'rara avis' as himself just now, to which he gave a laughing reply, and then gazed after the carriage with a self-satisfied smile. "Which shall it be?" he said to himself, then striking a light he took to his cigar and some reflections on the future.

Mr. Clayton entered the house at the same time as the three girls, and Helen sought to thaw his usual demeanour.

"We have had a delightful drive, why didn't you come, uncle?"

"I?" he answered, "oh, I have something else to do," he added hurriedly, as if in alarm at the suggestion; and his niece gazed after him as he fortified himself again in his study; and then as she saw Mabel soon follow him with a glass of sherry, (his usual noonday draught,) Helen wondered how he could be so cold under the influence of such gentle devotion as Mabel always showed him. The answer was *Pride*. He sometimes longed to be able to soften or relax old manners and habits, while a false shame held him icebound and hard.

Mabel placed the sherry at his side, and then said rather falteringly, "Papa, Bentley asked a favour of me, but begged me to mention it to you, and gain your consent first; he asked if Elva and I might follow his body from the churchyard gate to the grave, as chief mourners; because he has no relations, and we had visited him at times."

Mr. Clayton rose from the table in angry impatience.

"This is what it has come to! You will be asked to be 'chief mourner' to every old tramp in the place! Mrs. Macpherson was right, I think! Certainly *not* with my consent. Bentley indeed! His boy I imprisoned once for robbing my fruit, a fine idea, *you* 'chief mourner!'"

"Do let me!" pleaded his daughter. "It is an exceptional case; and it was such a *little* boy, papa, and he died soon after!"

Mabel did not repeat the report she had heard, that a chill caught in prison had cut short the young life of Bentley's sole surviving relative.

Her father fumed about the room, but for once Mabel was persistent, he caught the reflection of her tearful, wistful eyes in the glass over the fireplace, and it softened him a little.

"Well, this once, never again," he answered hastily, "don't bother me with such nonsense any more!"

His daughter thanked him gently and withdrew, as he muttered something about tramps and gaping villagers. When they all met at luncheon, Amy was much brighter than hitherto, Sir Robert's appearance had delighted her, and she chattered away lightly on various topics not often discussed at Fir Lodge, giving glowing details of her London life, and enlightening Mr. Clayton, at least, as to certain vanities in practice as to paint and powder, and fashions in vogue; he heard her in silence, now and then regarding her with a deeply puzzled expression, and glancing once with a sigh of relief at his daughter, inwardly comparing the two as companions and conversationalists, but when Amy launched forth into high praise of Mrs. Macpherson, he shrugged his shoulders impatiently, and retired to his study somewhat precipitately. A few minutes after the cousins had their first introduction to one of his fits of passion. Sounds of high wrath below stairs rose to their ears, accompanied by stamping and prancing on a brick floor. The sisters looked aghast, Elva frightened,

while Mabel rose from her seat in haste, and bade Elva run out to play on the lawn, to which the child gave ready obedience, then with a pale hue on her cheek, Mabel left the room, and they soon heard her voice saying, "What is it, papa? I am coming to help if I can."

"*Don't* come down here!" was the shouted reply, and then followed his favourite expletive, "*Good* Gemini heart alive!" and then indistinct mutterings of speechless indignation; and then the explanation, as Mabel stood on the top of the stairs leading down to the cellars.

"That confounded ass of a man Higgins has just managed to fall down with a basket of the sherry I was going to arrange in the bins, and here it is all over the bricks!—gh-r-r-r-r-gh!"

By the faint light below, Mabel could see the face of the unlucky Higgins looking up beseechingly to her, as he rubbed his elbow ruefully, and her father prancing about on a sheet of shining liquid. She quickly sent down help and cloths, while Amy who had followed her silently stood convulsed with laughter for a while, and then returned to give Helen a "Rehearsal of the first Pantomime."

Mabel had no heart to laugh at the ridiculous side of the picture; to her there was a very sad reality in these dramas, and by the time she had calmed her father's anger, in a measure, she felt rather in alarm lest Amy's shouts of laughter should reach his ears. Higgins came up with stains and wounds on his elbow, and to Mabel's inquiries in the matter, replied in an injured tone,

"'Twas them frogs, miss; I wish the Frenchmen *did* eat 'em here-aways, as they said you would see 'em do in France. There's a *Mossoo* in the school yonder, he's quite welcome to feed here! I put my foot on one o' the quadrupeds, and down I went, and the sherry did went too! But lor! Master hurts one's feelings more than do the bricks! There's that young Buttons grinning like a Christmas clown, at his calling *me* 'a fibberty gibbety hass!'"

Mabel could not help smiling at last, but gave remedies for the wounded elbow into the sympathetic cook's hands, and then sought

Elva for their afternoon engagement. The solemn words of the funeral service touched and calmed Mabel's heart. Elva held her hand tightly, and followed with a grave sweet wistfulness on her face ; but when the service was over she ran to Mr. Erlton's side and put her hand in his, as she had sometimes done after her dear Grandfather's reverent voice had consigned a "brother" or "sister" to the last earthly resting place. The Rector bowed to Mabel and said, "Thank you for coming ; it is a melancholy thing to have no real mourners, so I am glad on Bentley's behalf that he found one, at least ; you found out the good there was in him in time for him not to die quite in the odour of the dog who has a bad name."

"Good Gemini heart alive!" mimicked Amy, on their appearance at tea-time, "how solemn that child looks! Come here, you mite, and tell me why! One would think 'the *old black man*' had frightened you!"

"He wasn't *black*," replied the child—"why, you are reading with your book upside down!" she laughingly added, as she leant against Amy's knee, the young lady reclining luxuriously before the fire.

"Yes, my dear, I 'read left-handed,' like the country girl in church, but whom do you mean by '*he*?' I like to hear about *he's*, little 'Jenny Wren.'"

"That's a *nice* name! oh, well, old Bentley, I mean."

"And who is old Bentley?"

"Why the man we have just seen buried ; didn't you know his name?" said Elva absently, playing with the trinkets on Amy's chain.

"The old man *you* saw *buried*?" cried Amy in horror.

"Yes, didn't auntie have time to tell you about it? He was a very poor old man, he had no one to love him except Auntie May, and I think perhaps Mr. Erlton too, because he was kind to him, and so we went to his funeral," she said simply, while tracing the pattern of the carpet with a tiny shoe-tip.

"How *horrid*!" drawled Amy, gazing in astonishment, first at the

child, then at Mabel, but Elva's attention had been drawn to the tea-table by a request to "hand cousins their tea," and soon afterwards the sound of carriage wheels caused a diversion of interest.

"Here are the Paileys," said Amy, "won't you take off that dismal black dress, Mabel? it suits your complexion, but it may shock Lady Pailey!"

"Very well, I will change it," replied her cousin, while Amy stood up to arrange some stray curls on her forehead, gazing at her reflection in the mirror with a satisfied expression, "I'm very fond of myself, I know I am," she said calmly to Helen; "you're a very nice looking girl, Amy Rogers!"

"Oh, don't be so *absurd*," laughed Helen indulgently, "people will think you mean such nonsense if you don't take care; won't they, Elva? Well, I suppose that people who are content with themselves are spared a lot of regretful contemplation, or effort to improve."

Amy welcomed Lady Pailey with a great deal more effusion than she generally showed towards invalid elderly ladies, but soon joined Sir Robert in the balcony verandah, whither he had stepped on not finding Mabel in the room, and seeing both young ladies giving their attention to his mother. She was a pale, pretty little woman, and as Mabel entered she rose and gave her a warm greeting, more especially as her idolized son had enjoined her somewhat brusquely in the carriage a few minutes before to "be civil to Miss Clayton." And Mabel was really glad to see a friend of her lost mother, and had gone to visit her as often as possible in her loneliness of late years.

"If Robert would stay in the country I should not come so seldom," said Lady Pailey; "but I cannot summon energy to go out alone often."

"And now that my mother's health is improving, she is anxious to keep out of so much debt as to calls, and is beginning at Fir Lodge by way of improvement in her manners," said her son, leaving the balcony and Amy, who noticed with a pang of resentment, his im-

pressive attention to Mabel as he seated himself by her side ; but was relieved to find that not even a heightened colour on Mabel's part answered his gaze of undisguised admiration and interest, and when Mr. Clayton entered he was soon engaged in conversation on some subject of interest to both gentlemen.

As Sir Robert said 'good-bye,' he asked Mabel in a tone of banter how "the *favoured* sick fossil" was, and amid the silence of curious listeners, she could only answer, "He is dead ;" then seeing Lady Pailey was about to institute sympathetic inquiries, he turned the conversation lightly to Amy, feeling uncomfortably certain that he had once again made a mistake, and lost ground with the one he longed to captivate.

"Well, mother, and how would you like her as your daughter-in-law?" he asked as they drove home.

"Very, very much, dear ; I wish you would marry."

"These windows may surely be opened now, mother ! That room was rather warm, I feel quite hot."

"Just so, Robert dear ; Mabel doesn't generally have hot rooms—the cousins like them perhaps,—but I am really afraid to have the window down now I am rather warm ; I so easily get a chill."

"I don't think it *can* hurt you to-day, really, mother.—I do hate driving in a box like this ! I hope you haven't any more calls to pay ? I wish I had my horse here !"

"No more calls if you dislike them, dear ; but I thought you said we would pay off a few. However, I am ready to go home, but I *must* ask you to shut that window."

"All right, both if you like now ; I see we are coming to a short-cut path in the fields, so I can walk it."

"Oh, no ! well, keep the windows down, and I will wrap this shawl well round me ; we seldom drive together, Robert,—it is quite a treat to me," said the fond mamma.

"But I see a gamekeeper there in the second field ; I want to give

him an order about that wood being watched. Mr. Clayton and I are going to stop so much poaching round here."

The mother regretfully watched her handsome son as he sprang over the style and strode away. Had she watched a little longer she would have seen him pass the said gamekeeper without any notice; but she would have put it down as absence of mind while thoughts of Mabel possessed him; and would gladly have believed it, for she longed to see him settle down, as she thought matrimony would insure his doing.

Dinner was kept waiting long that night, but he had said he should be there for it, so Lady Pailey practised patience and fasting as contentedly as she could. At last he came in, whistling an operatic air, and held his hands over the fire in silence.

"My darling Robert, how late you are!"

"Am I? By Jove, I didn't think of it, and don't feel hungry now. I met Macpherson, and he asked me to show him the horses Mrs. Mac wants to buy of me, so we talked in the paddock; and then I stayed to give the studgroom orders. Macpherson knows as much about a horse as a guinea-pig does; he could only deliver his wife's messages about them, and talked of their *paws*!"

"Was his wife not with him?"

"No, he was trusted out alone for once! He says she is going to give a picnic,—I shall stay for it, though I promised Lawson I would have a week with him in London, and he is waiting for me to fix our meeting; however, he will understand when he hears of the Rogers being here, and will be on the wrong scent at once."

"Can't you ask him here? I would arrange picnics whenever you like, Robert, if you will stay with me a little more. I could find a chaperone hostess, to act for me, in Mrs. Macpherson, I am sure."

"Well, yes, Lawson might come, as you say—but picnics are not in his line—nor in mine—unless 'circumstances alter cases'—as now. He admired Helen, I fancied."

"Do you know those young ladies well?"

"Yes. Mrs. Rogers is a gay widow. Amy is good fun at times when she is in a good temper, and sometimes when she is in a bad one. She is naughty, but funny on some such occasions. Helen is different, I can't understand her."

"She seemed amiable, and very ladylike."

"Amiable! well, yes, with one exception, perhaps. Her eyes looked splendid then! she assailed me sharply, though!"

Lady Pailey looked shocked and inquiring.

"I don't mean she scratched my eyes out. But Amy was exhibiting and ridiculing some album verses belonging to Helen, who bore that quietly enough, so I added some of a different character, encouraged by Amy; but when Helen discovered them I was 'roasted,' and the verses torn out."

"It was a pity to tease her so, Robert. And do you prefer Amy to her?"

"Amy suits me better; but there are plenty of her sort in London drawing-rooms."

Lady Pailey rose from her seat, and placed her hands on his shoulders as she said,

"It is the dearest wish of my heart to see you married, and if Mabel were willing to be your wife I *should* be content."

"'Willing!'" he repeated; "well, I fancy almost any girl is willing to marry twenty thousand a year and a title, offered by a tolerably good looking fellow!"

"Yes, but Mabel is not like other girls in general."

"At any rate I can have no rivals here; and I shall certainly hope to win if I choose to do the running."

So he said and thought as he retired for the night.

CHAPTER VII.

"COME, Amy, every one is waiting, and there is a nice boy come to hasten us to 'Macpherson's Repos!' Mabel is dressed, and looks perfectly charming."

"Now, Helen, *don't* pile on enthusiasm over Mabel! and what is she dressed in to look so wonderful?"

"Oh, only a very soft looking, creamy woollen dress, and a gipsy kind of hat; but she looks so *dove-like*!"

"Sweet innocence! you make me sick, Helen!"

"Do I?—well, you will soon feel better when you see—oh dear! I mustn't say it.—But do come down now, dear."

"I wish *you* wouldn't call me '*dear*!' it is so mawkish! A boy down there, you say? The young reptile will tread on our dresses, and be a nuisance generally. Mabel is trying to shine forth, I suppose, on account of Sir Robert."

"She has more taste than to care for *him*," said Helen.

"She might care to be his wife, though, you simpleton! I *cannot* make my hair go high enough to-day! this hat needs a perfect stack to make it look well. But these people seem slaves to time, so I must give it up."

"Yes, for Elva and Burton are so eager to be off."

Burton was the doctor's only son, given in middle-aged time, and therefore perhaps all the more prized and loved.

As the girls descended, Amy noticed with disapproval her sister's plain attire; but Helen protested that she meant to enjoy herself "in real scrambles and rambles where no consideration of fine dresses need hinder;" and also congratulating herself that no one would notice or trouble about her appearance with Amy and Mabel present.

Mr. Clayton appeared at the moment when Helen and Amy joined the others, his watch in his hand, saying impatiently,

"Why are you so unpunctual, Mabel? You *know* how much Mrs. Macpherson dislikes her plans to be thwarted; she sent Burton half an hour ago, too, to say they were all waiting.—Most absurd to be so late in starting!"

Mabel said something about being all ready now, while Amy shrugged her shoulders and advanced to the carriage, and Mr. Clayton hustled his daughter and the children impatiently after her.

"It was our fault, uncle," said Helen, good-humouredly; "don't you really mean to come with us?"

"No, thank you, and *I* wouldn't face Mrs. Mac *now*!"

Amy said haughtily as the carriage moved, "I think Mrs. Mac is not more alarming than some people rather nearer to us!"

At which Mabel's fair cheek flushed, and Helen gave vent to an indignant exclamation, but was checked by Mabel pointing out some fine blackberries to the children, and proposing a walk to get some next day; to which all eagerly consented, Amy excepted, who was ruffled, and declared against brambles tearing her dress, and sour berries staining her fingers.

Mrs. Macpherson's party was quite to her mind. Sir Robert advanced at once to meet the Fir Lodge group, and glanced at Mabel with a sort of proud possession already, though he complimented Amy in terms quite to her taste on the successful picnic costume she had chosen.

Mrs. Macpherson was in her element, managing everything and everybody in the order of procession to the hills.

"Mabel," she cried, "I shall give you two gentlemen in your carriage, and I will take Helen Rogers and the two children.—Mac, you can sit on the box, but don't put your feet through the hamper there. Sir Robert and Dr. Fentold, you will please go in Miss Clayton's carriage;—we can change parties in returning, if agreeable."

Sir Robert congratulated her on her perfect arrangement, which he said could not be improved upon,—and Amy, who was to remain

in Mabel's party, bowed her acknowledgment, appropriating the pith of the compliment ; for she did not really consider Mabel in the light of a rival, especially as she was then having a humorous but eager discussion with the old doctor, and even Amy's attention was attracted to the lovely effect on her cousin's countenance,—the sweet child-like lips were parted merrily over small white teeth, and the peach-like cheeks flushing sweetly as she spoke ; the view disquieted Amy, and she returned to banter idle words with her *vis-à-vis* as to his leaving his flattery at Willow Cottage, to be called for later, as it might get lost on the hills.

" I hope not to *throw any away* to-day," he said half absently, as he looked enviously at Dr. Fentold, and then whispered to Amy, " Why did they put old Pills in our carriage ?"

" Are you jealous ?" she replied ; " very well, I shall tell Mrs. Mac that you have complained of your company, and we will get you a change coming home."

" I don't think you will,—there is no one *you* would prefer to me, is there !"

Amy turned away in mock disgust, but soon gave a beaming look of assent to his remark. He smiled a little, thinking how easy conquest was as a rule, and then rudely interrupted the doctor and asked Mabel some trivial question, to which however she did not reply till she had heard her old friend's remark completed.

The Baronet turned in pique to Amy, and Mabel glanced admiringly at her cousin's radiant face. She attached no importance to Sir Robert's fulsome compliments to herself, but took them as his style of conversation, and imagined that he and Amy really understood each other in their very free mutual discourse and manner, and that she was really the attraction which kept him by his mother's side for once.

" I mean to enjoy a picnic for one day in my life," he said to Mabel after some general conversation and some mutual amusement, " ' a red letter day' to me."

"If the theory be true that the day depends on the spirit in which one starts in it you will not be disappointed," she replied, "everybody looks quite happy ; I have noticed in the few picnics I have been to there is some one looking bored,—I do pity them so !" Then turning again to the doctor, she continued, "What a young Hercules Burton grows !"

"Yes, he is a fine fellow,—health, strength, and honesty, thank GOD ! But he is quite Byronic in his early devotion to Elva, and told me gravely yesterday that he 'should marry her when she was grown up enough ;' and I believe she has consented to the arrangement !"

"He must be an adept in the art of successful courtship," said Sir Robert ; "will he give me lessons ?"

"Surely *you* will not find the path difficult ?" said Amy, knowing well that he could digest more open flattery than any man she knew, and wishing to please him ; his mother's unfailing admiration and devotion had made him dull to feelings of delicate reserve in the matter, and he took it as common food.

"By the way, Amy—I beg pardon, I mean Miss Rogers," he continued by way of answer, "a big catch is coming to stay with me next week, Lord Lawson Rencliffe ; you saw him in London, I think ?"

"No, I remember mother speaking of him ; I didn't meet him, I was visiting at the time," but she forthwith fell to musing whether her late uneasiness on Mabel's account might not be laid aside and a new field of conquest open to herself. "I will wait," she said to herself ; "perhaps I will give up Sir Robert to Mabel ; but he will soon tire of her religious fancies and foibles, and I don't think Lady Pailey, junior, will be allowed to follow old tramps to their graves ! If Lord Lawson has no mother it will be a great advantage, Lady Pailey has a dreadful odour of hypochondriac horrors about her ! and I should have to visit her."

She turned her eyes and saw Sir Robert darkly watching Mabel and the doctor enjoying conversation again, and leaning forward she said mischievously,

"Oh, Mabel likes old parties best, we are too frivolous for her, too fond of pomps and vanities, and with no philanthropy about us. I shan't forget the *smell* of philanthropy! I was beguiled into attending a service once at a chapel attached to a Home, and it was an ordeal, passing through a mass of boys in July!"

"I wonder how you will like my friend Rencliffe?" said Sir Robert. "He has a lot of power over people, and he is conscious of it in a quiet way. The woman he loves must either be a perfect tool in his hands, or have a power equal to his own, and he must know it; a half-and-half character would never get on with him."

Amy felt more and more inclined to conquer the coming knight-errant, and a curious smile of anticipated struggle and triumph curled her red lips.

Mrs. Macpherson had arrived before any others at the spot chosen for the repast, and was busily engaged in command of servants and spouse, the latter timorously holding a pile of plates. The two "infants," as Amy styled them, much to Burton's disgust, were begging Helen to join them in a game among the trees, which she promised to do if Mrs. Mac did not need her assistance.

"No, I think we had better all take a little walk to counteract the stiffness from driving so far," said the lady manager. "Mr. Erlton is riding after us; he had some work to do first, he said."

"I prefer to rest," said Amy; "give me a cushion, please, under this tree, Sir Robert; and *you* are not vigorous either, you may stay and talk to me, if you like."

But he did not, or would not understand, and unceremoniously left her side and advanced to Mabel.

"Will you come and see the view from that point in shade there? if you know it, you can enjoy it again."

"Oh, yes," she replied, but declining his proffered arm to help her mount the hill. "Come, Helen," she added, "you were wanting a scramble."

"Oh, yes, a scramble first, and games after," cried the boy,—Helen felt sure that Mabel really desired her company, so she joined her in spite of the blank look in Sir Robert's countenance.

"I wish I had spoiled twenty precious albums for her!" he said, inwardly.

They had scarcely started when Mr. Erlton reached the spot where Mr. Macpherson was still busy over his plates, arranging and rearranging them by way of something to amuse himself with; and the Rector seated himself by Amy's side, much to her relief, for any man was better than none, she thought.

But Elva had persuaded Burton to run back with her and fetch her friend to join them at the Point, and they came with the request.

"No," answered Amy, "Mr. Erlton is taking care of me,—you had far better bring Helen away from the Point, and tell her she is *de trop*."

"I can't remember that, and I don't know what it means," said Elva.

"Sir Robert Pailey will translate it for you; he and Miss Clayton can find their way home by themselves, *when* they can think of being hungry."

"*Won't* you come, Mr. Erlton?" pleaded Elva, "ah, do!"

"I cannot resist that," he said, rising and taking her hand, just as Mr. Macpherson came to Amy's side, and rested from his labours; but she was cross, and snubbed the poor little man's frail attempts at conversation.

The Rector and his companions found the trio sitting on the grassy top of the Point, the harvestful valley glowing below them, Helen was just beginning to take a rough sketch of the view in her pocket-

book. Sir Robert, who was meditating a small move to be further from Helen, looked very cross as the others swelled the ranks of the enemy.

"Miss Rogers says you are—what was it that I was to say, Mr. Erlton?" asked Elva.

"*Who is what?*" inquired Mabel, smiling.

"Why, Miss Helen Rogers is—what, Mr. Erlton?"

"Nay, *you* were to give the message, Elva."

"I can't remember it, but Burton can, I know."

"She said we were to bring her away," said he, "the other was only chaff in French, and I don't want to say it."

"Well then she must tell you herself," sighed Elva; "I'm sorry I can't remember."

When they turned homewards the children begged for a race to the foot of the Point, "in scramble fashion," and the Rector joined them at once, Helen following, but Mabel could not without rudeness ignore Sir Robert's entreaty to stay a moment and watch a curious insect under his inspection just then; after a few moments she reminded him that Mrs. Macpherson had shouted for all to come to luncheon.

"By Jove, it is a nuisance to have to spoil present bliss by thinking of lobster salad!" he remarked pettishly.

"I can't agree," said she; "I confess to a very keen appetite, after the long drive, and in this hill air."

"A real country appetite," he said absently, thinking if any advances might be made judiciously just now.

"Yes, a vulgar one, if you like," she answered.

"One cannot imagine *you* under the shadow of any imperfection, least of all *vulgarity!*" he said, with more tenderness in his tone than usual.

Mabel laughed lightly, saying, "Then please do not spoil my vaunted appetite with such unwholesome flattery."

"It is not flattery, it is a truth."

"Please distribute such truths equally at lunch."

"Do not laugh my words aside, Miss Clayton ; I wish you would believe that I admire you above all others."

"I am sorry your taste is so imperfect."

"And you scorn my admiration and regard?"

"Not your friendly regard,—you are the son of my mother's old friend."

"Well, I will try to be satisfied—for the present ; and, meanwhile, how do you like your new Rector?"

"I have seen very little of him," answered Mabel, glad of any change of subject.

"You are cautious. For my part, if I don't like a man I say so,—why not? It is humbug to hide honest dislike under sham friendliness. Now I dislike all parsons in general, and this one in particular."

"Why should you?"

"Oh, he is the quiet reproach kind I hate ; I *feel* he disapproves of all I say. His calm face makes me angry, and I wish he would be rude or quarrelsome, instead of always so courteously entrenched."

Mabel did not answer, and there was no time for further discussion.

"Come, all you truants!" cried Mrs. Mac. "The view took a long time to be sure," and she gave Mabel an irritating pat on the hand, with a meaning smile, and then placed her and Sir Robert side by side at the rough table under the trees, for Mrs. Mac was too good a manager to cramp her guests in tailor-posture on damp ground.

"Isn't it all *delicious* fun!" cried Elva ; "I wish we had dinner out of doors always."

"I wish I could say that was the sum total of my desires!" cried Amy.

"Indeed, I should like a mind a little above that ambition," said Helen drily.

"Well, there is one consolation," said Amy, "none but children ever are perfectly contented and happy."

"I differ," said Sir Robert, "I am perfectly happy now."

"Not too happy to eat, I hope," said Mrs. Mac, "you are not even beginning."

"I don't want any of that kind of happiness!" said Burton, keenly relishing his pigeon-pie.

"I must differ, too," said Mr. Erlton, "one is often perfectly happy, but the drawback is in the short duration."

"A good opportunity for a sermon," sneered Sir Robert; and then he added, "I was always told when I was a little boy that '*good*' boys were always happy.' What do you think, Miss Clayton?"

"I suppose earthly happiness is always qualified," she said gently, "and we must certainly *wait* for the enduring kind."

"We are getting too serious!" cried Mrs. Macpherson. "Now, Mac, *do* talk to Miss Pelham! You must draw him out, my dear, he's a perfect dummy in society."

Miss Pelham began the process by a mild remark on "what a fine day it was."

"Extremely so," answered her host, catching his wife's commanding eye; "it is most fortunate that we have a fine day—because, because it would have been so unfortunate had it been wet."

"You had better give Miss Pelham some of that tongue before you," said his wife drily, and her uneasy spouse said, "Certainly,—and Mrs. Macpherson said to me this morning, 'it will be a fine day,' and she was right, as she is at times—I mean generally."

There was suppressed amusement, and then Sir Robert feeling warmed toward mischief addressed himself to a very young lady on his left, who was on a visit to an aunt, and "had to be asked," Mrs. Mac said.

The poor girl fresh from school was intensely shy and nervous in company, though really well-informed, and talented in some ways.

To Sir Robert's occasional remarks she could only stammer out an "oh," or a "yes," or "no," in turns, and watching his opportunity in general silence he hazarded a small remark, to which a faint "oh" answered, amid blushes.

"I beg your pardon, I lost that remark of yours," he said, with mock attention.

"I only said *oh !*" stammered the poor girl.

"Oh, exactly," he answered eagerly ; "just so,—I *quite* agree with you."

She blushed and almost burst into tears in her hopeless confusion and shame—as she thought it. Mabel and Helen looked indignant, and plunged into seemingly animated interest in a butterfly on the ground near them, some looked pitifully at the scarlet cheeks of Sir Robert's victim, which made her feel more inclined to creep under the table, Mrs. Mac coughed uneasily, but while all this lasted only a minute—though ages to the one chiefly concerned—Mr. Erlton had attacked a fowl in a dish before him and somehow, not by accident, managed a general diversion by sending it flying into a bowl of sweet-pea blossoms in the centre of the table,—and the laughter that followed from Burton and Elva proved infectious, kept up by Mr. Erlton's dramatic expression and his remark to Burton, "It ought to have been a *duck* and *green* peas."

By the time the effect had subsided the girl's blushes had done the same, and she was possessed by "an honest hatred" against her tormentor for many a year to come. Keen and stinging is the memory of such wounds to our youthful sensitiveness and pride, when a false step in etiquette seems more disgraceful than a real sin appears in later life.

"You are not *overburdened* with *good nature !*" said Mabel to Sir Robert later on in a rush of general conversation ; "you at any rate cut short that pretty schoolgirl's happiness to-day ; how could you !"

"*You* are privileged to lecture me," he answered, but his cheek

flushed ; " I thank you for the kindly interest in my behaviour. It was so kind of you, too, to preach the Rector's sermon for him on happiness."

Mabel felt half pity for the man's complete self-love and wounded vanity, so plainly exhibited, and answered, " I could not make you feel so really *hurt* as that poor child was just now ; *please* attack stronger and older game in future."

" Anything to please *you*," he answered, " but I shall of course expect a ' prize for good conduct. ' "

Mrs. Macpherson here claimed general attention to the following matter, giving out that she was going to give an entertainment to the schoolboys studying in a small " genteel establishment," as the proprietor termed it, in the village, and begging any friends, who chose, to come and help her, specially Mr. Erlton with his superior magic lantern.

" Really I must cry off," answered Amy ; " magic lanterns are *too* deadly lively for me, and the schoolmaster's wife overpowers me with long words when by chance Mabel speaks to her ; after church last Sunday night she gushed over ' the mysterious scintillation of the heavenly orbs. ' I feel as if my brains were all in my heels when she brings out some unknown word of five syllables."

" Well, you had your revenge the other day," said Helen, laughing, " when you showed her your one remaining glove in the lane, and asked her gravely if she had seen its '*compatriot* ! ' She could not make you out."

" I know,—but when I want to use a long word I never can think of the right one, and I wanted one for her."

" Now for hide and seek ! " cried Burton ; " come, Elva ! "

" And you too," said Elva, throwing her arms round Helen's neck.

" Oh, you *cannot* think of making yourself a martyr to children and indigestion immediately after lunch ! " cried Sir Robert. " I want you

to come and talk to me under the tree there, beside Miss Clayton and the old medico."

"Hush! he is Burton's father," she said aside, while the boy's cheeks flushed and his fists were clenched involuntarily.

"Are you *really* going to join these young kangaroos?" he said, as Elva jumped with joy at Helen's preparations to join their play.

"Certainly, I gave my promise; and hide-and-seek can be played without much trouble or exertion here."

"Well, you ought to be canonized if you die after it."

She laughed, and left him to sullen solitude, for having let Mabel escape him while he lit his cigar, and feeling rather tired of Amy, he had resolved to amuse himself with Helen who looked unusually bright and pretty to-day, and just as he was meditating an advance to the other side of Miss Clayton, Mr. Erlton turned in the same direction and gained the place first. Amy saw it, and gave Sir Robert a tantalizing smile of amusement at his defeat, for she had noticed where his glance had been resting and divined his movement. "Excommunicated by the Church!" she said with mock pity.

"I could roll him down the hill for half a farthing!" he answered in undisguised wrath.

"Don't stop for want of funds; I will give you a penny," she replied. "Look at poor little Mac! he has stepped backwards into the tray of tumblers! I believe Mrs. Mac is going to *shake* him!"

Mr. Erlton ran to the scene of action, offering help in sorting serviceable and unserviceable glasses, in time to protect his frightened host, in a measure, saying, "There never was a picnic yet without something of the sort occurring, unfortunately for hospitable entertainers."

"*He is sure* to do something awkward," bitterly answered his spouse.

"My dear," gasped her small partner, "some one placed them behind me quite silently, I didn't see them,—I'm extremely sorry, extremely so!"

"*Any* one else would have—" began the lady, but something in the Rector's face checked her, and she ordered Mac to go and play with the children.

Sir Robert soon gained the vacant place by Mabel, and said as he sat down, "There's Mac gone to join the games ; I hope Mrs. Mac won't send *me* ! Let me hide under your protection while that boy 'raves through the hollow pass in vain'—he may by good chance lose himself ; oh, beg pardon, doctor, I forgot he is your son."

The doctor looked at him half curiously, half contemptuously for a moment, and then rising, said drily,

"I suppose young boys and *old* boys *are* in the way sometimes ;— I shall go and flirt with that pretty little schoolgirl, and try to apply the healing art to her after your rough sarcasm at luncheon."

"Confound him !" muttered the Baronet. "I say, Miss Clayton, your cousin must be poor in friends that she can't risk offending those children ! she *would* victimize herself rather than lose their favour."

"None of us are so rich in friends as to afford the risk of such a loss, Sir Robert," and then she rose, saying she must go and see what flower it was that Dr. Fentold and Miss Grey were examining, and Sir Robert watched her as she linked her arm within the schoolgirl's, and then laughingly challenged the old doctor to come with them into the wood and join the merry games going on there now, Elva's silvery peals and Burton's rougher tones of excitement attesting to the enjoyment ; Mabel asked Amy, too, if she cared to accompany them.

"No, thanks," said she, "I will enjoy the scene from an enchanting distance."

Mr. Erlton followed the others to the wood, while Sir Robert flung himself down beside Amy, and she began to question him with feigned indifference in her tone about his expected friend.

"He gets on with everybody," he said, as a finish to a description, "all things to all men' perhaps—and old people always like him."

"That says little for him. Old people generally like namby-pamby girls that can't say bo to a little goose like Mr. Mac, and 'Christian youths' who don't smoke and wear hideous attire and black gloves."

"Well, Lawson is not answering that description at present," laughed her companion.

"No, or he wouldn't be your particular friend, I opine."

"Do you think I only club with black sheep?"

"No—I don't think you are so very bad," she said in a patronizing tone, looking calmly in his face.

"You are out of your depth," he said, fixing some ivy in her hat as it lay on her knee.

"Your own estimate of yourself is this, isn't it, Sir Robert? 'as good a fellow as any, and better than most.'"

"You are severe," he said yawning, as Mrs. Macpherson came up to him and begged him to go and tell the young ladies in the wood that they must not tire themselves out, and she hoped all would return for some tea.

The Rector placed himself by Mabel's side, and it seemed to him that the fair face just visible under a curling feather in the gipsy hat was a very lovely picture, but he suddenly rose and busied himself handing tea and cake, then he sat down by Elva, to her great delight, for "the clergyman who lives in Grandpa's house" was always an object of intense interest to her.

"I think you have run about more than enough, little fay," he said, noticing her pallor, and a certain look of exhaustion in her face.

Mabel heard the words, and gave a quick look of alarmful inquiry, he answered it by saying in a quiet but earnest tone, "This young lady requires the curb on, Miss Clayton, I think." And then while Mrs. Macpherson wrapped Elva in a shawl, Mabel said,

"Tell me what you think, Mr. Erlton,—I am quite inexperienced in the daily care of children."

"She looks a frail little thing, and reminds me so much of a little sister I loved once, and she died of a neglected cold, caught through a sudden chill after over-exertion. Do not let me alarm you now, for Mrs. Macpherson is certainly guarding against a chill,—and pray excuse my giving you advice arising from sad experience."

"Certainly,—thank you for it," she said earnestly.

"Elva is a prize worth preserving," said Helen sitting near; "what a loving little ray she is!"

"Now, 'Home' is the word," cried their hostess; "it is autumn, remember, so an early return is necessary. I have had no complaints as to company in coming, so I conclude all are content; but we can find you a seat in a carriage, Mr. Erlton, if you prefer it to your horse."

"No, thank you, I will stick to my 'gee-gee' and be an outrider," and to Elva's delight he rode by her side as she sat on Mabel's knee by way of one departure from the routine of the day, her contented little face peering brightly from the folds of the shawl; Mabel listened in silence to their voices,—one so small, and the other so rich and musical, and as the carriage rolled through the sandy lanes, and eventide calm fell softly round her, she felt a peace and rest in heart and mind, in spite of the one shadow always over her young life. She could not help feeling keen regret at her father's injunction respecting their Rector, it made her feel constrained, and any friendly intercourse that could not be avoided was still under protest on her part, therefore could not be freely enjoyed; a loss she was conscious of as she now glanced at his steadfast high-souled expression, a constant change of humour round his finely cut flexible mouth, with determination of character in his somewhat massive chin, and she felt that the man might in this case be measured by his stature, and a fair standard either way arrived at.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANOTHER week flew quickly by, several pleasant excursions and meetings had been enjoyed only in a moderate degree by Amy, as neither Sir Robert nor his friend had appeared, owing to the latter delaying his visit, and Sir Robert after all joining him in London for a week, then the young men came together to the Park one chilly autumn evening. The three cousins met them as they returned from their drive rather later than usual, and Amy's cheeks glowed brightly as the dog-cart sped swiftly past their carriage on the way from the railway station; Sir Robert, who was driving his friend, had not recognized the Fir Lodge party in time to stop before the gates were entered, and they were soon hidden by the shrubs Mr. Clayton loved to see thickly enclosing his domain.

On the following morning Amy had made up her mind to interview the new object for conquest, and when breakfast was over she asked Mabel if she had forgotten that she owed Lady Pailey a call, but Helen unsuspectingly answered eagerly,

"Oh, don't let us go to-day; I do so want to try and get that effect of afternoon sun on the beech-wood, before the glorious autumn tints change more."

"That is just like you, Helen; you always want to put your sketching before everything!"

"No, indeed I don't want to interfere with any pleasanter plans than another visit to the beech-wood. We all enjoyed it so much before," cried Helen.

"Then let us go to the Park to-day, will you, Mabel?" asked Amy, but Elva prevented an immediate reply by skipping into the room just then, and in a joyous tone exclaiming, "Auntie May, Burton is in the garden, and asks if we will go to the beech-woods again to-day,

it is so fine, and we can get a lot of the nuts in his school-bag, he says ; ah, *do !*"

Mabel was puzzled how to decide, but was relieved from the position by the entrance of Mr. Clayton, to whom Amy instantly appealed.

"There is a question needing your opinion, uncle,—Whether we go and get beechnuts, or return Lady Pailey's call, made some time ago."

"I don't understand how *beechnuts* can enter into competition with Lady Pailey's claims! But I hope you will not be any longer in returning her call," he answered decisively.

Elva's face fell, he noticed it, and said abruptly to his daughter,

"You surely are not allowing the child to raise any difficulties! there is a limit to—"

"Oh, no, Uncle Philip, it was an idea of mine, mentioned at first inadvertently," cried Helen, "but there is nothing in it; we can quite well give up our jaunt, Elva, till another day, can't we? And now, where is Burton? we will have a race round the lawn, and brush the cobwebs away from our respective noddles!"

And for once Mr. Clayton stood and watched the games from the window, grimly smiling for a while, then as Burton's vigorous young form attracted his attention he turned away with an audible sigh, and retired to his study.

The three girls started soon after luncheon, and Burton came to spend the afternoon with Elva as compensation for their disappointment. It was curious to see the lad's devotion to the tiny girl; who in her turn gave him loyal affection and ready help so far as she could in his pastimes, food for his pets was also gathered willingly by the tiny hands, while escaped rabbits were more than once wooed and won back to their hutch.

Amy was more than usually particular about her attire, and calmly requested Helen to take the feather out of her own hat and arrange it in hers, saying,

"You know I can't bear any other hat with this dress, and I spoiled my feather in that shower yesterday. *You* don't mind what you wear so long as it is not *outré*."

So the feather was transferred in spite of Helen's feeling conscious that the effect of her autumn costume was really marred considerably by the sacrifice.

Mabel was detained a few minutes by Mr. Clayton in his study, Amy relieved her impatience by dashing through a waltz, and raising her voice above the sound of the piano, cried merrily to Helen,

"I have decided to give up Sir Bobby and to capture his friend. I will give up Sir Bobby to Mabel."

"I hope she will feel sufficiently grateful. But here she is, Amy,—*don't* tease *her* by talking any such nonsense, *please!*"

But Amy was feeling mischievous, and greeted Mabel with a hope that she "*would* be grateful."

"For what?" asked her cousin; "for that pretty waltz?"

"No—for what Helen and I are arranging for you," replied Amy, "and I am to make a great sacrifice for your benefit."

"Declined with thanks, before I know what it is," said Mabel, smiling, and shaking her head decidedly; "no 'sacrifices' for *me*, please!"

"Ah, you will accept this one, and I can exercise the virtue of generosity; so let me congratulate *you* on your brilliant prospects, and *myself* on being a very good girl for once!"

"Come, May, do not listen to her; she is in a *rampagious* humour," cried Helen.

"Now I have distressed her mind,—*what* a joke!" said Amy, in a tone of satisfaction as she saw Mabel trying to solve the riddle.

They found Lady Pailey in a half darkened room,—heavy venetian blinds falling to the ground, and shutting out the view of the pretty lawns. She was in an "invalid chair" with an open book on her knee, which she had not been interested in lately, judging by her

greeting to Mabel whom she kissed warmly and placed her by her side on a sofa.

"Quand on parle du loup, &c. I could not *talk* about you, my dear, as I am alone, but I have been thinking of you for the last half-hour. I am so sorry the gentlemen are out coursing, Robert will be exceedingly disappointed to miss you,—all."

The last word evidently was an afterthought addition.

Helen could not resist giving Amy a glance of mock condolence, the sister returned it with a shrug of disgust, and retired to a corner couch with an album. She was getting weary of the paste-board resemblances of the Pailey family circle when voices sounded on the lawn, the blinds were noisily put aside and Sir Robert came hastily into the room, followed more slowly by his friend, who stopped to re-arrange the window-hangings as Lady Pailey liked them.

"I saw your carriage, Miss Clayton, and found coursing very flat all at once," said Sir Robert, with the patronizing tone and manner which always made Helen inclined to make an impertinent grimace at him. "Rencliffe, has the sun blinded you that you don't see a lady friend? You know Miss Helen Rogers, at least. I think you may be excused though in the dim dungeon-light mother lives in!"

"No, I think that even my powers of memory are exhausted by the four hours in this unusually hot autumn sun; next time I shall allow you to draw me over the ground in a bath-chair, Pailey; you have grown so wonderfully energetic since you have been in the country; what has put him into such a fever of restless excitement, Lady Pailey?" said the visitor, after introductions had been gone through and he had sat down by Amy's side.

Helen had scarcely seen him in the crowded London saloons, where they had met before, but now her 'artist eye' took in the form and features of what suddenly struck her as her ideal man so far as appearance went, and as she listened to his easy flow of conversation

and marked his manner in such contrast to that of his friend, she felt the charm of *quiet power* which always exercised a spell over her nature. As usual her thoughts were for others' good, and she yearned for Amy's future happiness to be insured by the love and guidance of such a competent guardian as in her youthful and impetuous judgment she considered he must be. As to his looking down on herself from his pedestal of perfection the idea did not enter her head. And she had somehow grown up with the idea that Amy could marry whom and when she pleased, for she had simply taken the young lady at her own premium unquestioningly, seeing her sway over many suitors, and unsuspecting of the ambition which ruled her heart. Helen at nineteen years old had keen eyes for many things where the "long lashes of charity" did not blind them.

Sir Robert begged Mabel to indulge her love of flowers by a visit to the conservatory just outside, but Lady Pailey protested, bidding him to rest satisfied with one victim to his energy that day ; he somewhat testily replied,

"Oh, Lawson is a humbug, and Miss Clayton is not a wax doll, mother, she won't melt easily!"

"But she has had a long drive, Robert," and Mabel added that they had already paid a long call and must go home again.

"Now, mother, see what you have done! of course Miss Clayton won't come and see the flowers if you throw cold water on them!"

Lady Pailey looked much distressed, and begged Mabel not to mind her protest if she were really inclined to go ; but Mabel said, "Another time please, Sir Robert ; papa always waits for us to give him some tea," when Amy, in a fit of caprice, said coquettishly, "Will you take *me*, Sir Robert?" but as he prepared to escort her she sat down again and said, "I didn't really mean to require the sacrifice!"

Lady Pailey looked puzzled, and tried to assure her that her son had willingly offered his services of his own accord just now.

"Ah, not to the general company," replied Amy, who was in high spirits, and generally provoking when in such case.

Mabel's cheeks flushed and Sir Robert interpreted it after his own way and desire, but Helen understood and was also rather afraid of Amy's becoming more mischievous, so she supported Mabel's opinion that "Uncle Philip would be wanting them to look after the two young people and their tea as well as his own," and in passing out she relieved Mabel of Sir Robert's overpowering attentions by asking him to give her a rose from a standard near their path, as she wished to paint one of the kind on Elva's birthday card.

Amy laughed pointedly saying, "Mind you don't prick your fingers, Helen, getting roses on other people's account!"

"Sir Robert is getting them on *my* account," said Helen, "your parable is erratic."

Amy went on amusing herself at Mabel's expense till they were in the carriage, thinking her wit was entertaining Lord Rencliffe, but he noticed Mabel's discomfort, Sir Robert's air of triumph, and Helen's efforts to turn aside the shafts or to shield Mabel. As they parted Amy whispered to Sir Robert her hopes that he was grateful to her for the production of *blush roses* for his benefit, whereupon he claimed her gratitude "for clearing the field" for her.

As the girls were driving home, Mabel said, "Lady Pailey is much changed since I first remember her, she used to be quite energetic."

"Did you see always as much of Sir Robert?" asked Helen, who was unusually inattentive to views and effects of light and shade in the lanes.

"No, when he was a boy he did not care to accompany his mother in her visits, and since he went to college he has been very little at home. I think his mother feels it sorely."

"She must be rather jealous of your influence over him," said Amy.

Helen interposed a remonstrance, Amy laughed it off, carelessly asking Mabel what she thought of Lord Rencliffe.

"So far as looks go I admired him, but I have never seen him before, so cannot say anything more."

"Oh, I can tell at once if I like people or not. I was struck with him altogether."

"He seemed gentlemanly and pleasant," said Mabel, rather absently, thinking of the children at home, whether they were too much for her father all the afternoon in their merriment, which would reach his study.

"How absurd!" cried Amy, "of *course* he is '*gentlemanly*,'—you might as well say that the Queen is royal."

"It depends, I suppose, on one's ideas of a gentleman," said Mabel, "and a few minutes' converse is not enough to see them realized."

"Oh, if you mean that a *saint* is the only true kind of gentleman I dare say there may be a doubt as to Lord Lawson's claim," said Amy rather bitterly. "I hope he is *not* a walking sign-post to Heaven! I would like him to stay outside the saintly pale with me!"

"Amy! do not kick over the traces so; you hurt yourself more than any one else," said Helen.

"Heigho! I wonder what the next scene is to be?" yawned the incorrigible one. "I wish Mrs. Mac would give a ball or something lively."

"Here she is; you can ask her," said Helen, and to her dismay Amy stopped the carriage, and coolly said,

"Helen is advising me to beg you to give a ball, Mrs. Macpherson."

"Indeed!" said that lady, taken aback for once and regarding both girls blankly, but on hearing Helen's tone of dismay as she said only, "Amy, how can you!" she seemed to understand the situation, and said, "We will see if we can get up something entertaining; I don't give balls in '*Mon Repos*;' it is too small. Ah, here is Mr. Erlton, looking grave as *two* judges!"

"We have been calling at the Park," said Amy; "there is a new candidate there for your efforts at amusement, Mrs. Macpherson."

"Oh, yes, I know all about it, young lady."

"Yes, think what a prize we three young spinsters have before us now,—something worth fighting for as to who shall win," cried Amy, defiantly, as she noticed the expression on the Rector's face.

"I *like* being frivolous, Mr. Erlton, and I like dearly to shock proper people now and then."

"Naughty girl!" said Mrs. Macpherson, in a tone of indulgence; and as the carriage drove away she asked Mr. Erlton if he did not admire Miss Rogers, and to his relief instead of waiting for an answer she added,—"*Mabel is very lovely, but she wants more of her cousin's style.*"

Mr. Erlton's face plainly expressed dissent; he did not answer, however, and she went on.

"Poor Mabel! she has a cloud over her now, but I think brighter days are soon coming."

"May I ask in what way?"

"Why, one can draw conclusions from facts, you know; though nothing is settled yet, but I don't mind telling *you* in confidence that I think Sir Robert will soon win her, and then she will be able to spread her wings freely."

"Have you good reason to think this?" he asked, with a touch of pain in the interest his tone expressed.

"Yes, I think so. I have seen and heard a good deal to make me hope for such an escape for her."

A curious and doubtful smile rested on his lips awhile, and then he said, "I suppose it would be considered a good thing for her."

"Of course; and Lady Pailey is so fond of her; there is no difficulty in the case."

He did not say anything more, and soon left her at her gate, where Mr. Macpherson was in readiness to receive her, and attended her

dutifully into the house, and, as requested, carried her bonnet up stairs, laying it carefully "on the crown" as directed, and then returned to her side for further orders.

People wondered how Mrs. Macpherson could have married such a nonentity. The fact was she had met him abroad and found him ill and lonely in a Pension, an object for her undisputed sway and management ; and after his recovery he gratefully and pitifully begged her not to leave him alone in a rough world any more. She accepted the charge, and if she was a rough gaoler she at any rate always defended the poor little man from any outside attacks, and when there was no other object for her superfluous energies, "Mac" was her safety-valve. And he was contented, for after years of solitude and often suffering he was in a haven of rest and security, where his weak mind and frail body could leave all to her.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day was so bright and warm that Helen proposed that they should take work and books into the well-built summer-house on the side lawn, and she would read to them while they worked for one or two morning hours. After luncheon they were to drive to the beech-woods, it was well to get as much open air life as the fine autumn would allow ; but Amy declared against the morning being spent among horrid spiders and garden discomforts, and ensconced herself in a sunny corner by the window in the morning room, idly gazing out.

"I don't like this morning, Elva," she said in a mock childish whine, "let's change it and have another morning. There is nothing to do, no one to see, and no one to be seen."

"You speak as if you were burdened with a number of unfulfilled wishes," said Mabel in her pleasant tones. "How can we relieve you of your *ennui*, lady fair?"

"Oh, I don't know,—I want something to cry for, I think. Helen, *say* you think Lord Lawson a very nice looking man!"

"Certainly I admired him."

"You did! Well, that is a tribute! You never like people I like."

"I did not say *like*, I said admire."

"But you cannot admire where you dislike."

"No? But I can admire before I dislike."

Elva ran out of the room and soon reached the garden gate, where she had seen the Rector stop his horse and dismount.

Amy reported the matter, and added, "He is coming in here, Mabel, for a wonder! He seems to me to think you such very white sheep that he need not look you up. And by the way, talking of sheep, I hear that the old spinster sister of your village Wesleyan 'shining light,' wrote to the rival Methodist parson whom she sits under, as 'My dear *Pastor*,' and signed herself as 'your affectionate *sheep*, Jemima Figgins.' I was convulsed dangerously for five minutes when Mrs. Macpherson told me of it!"

When the girls' laughter had subsided, they heard Mr. Erlton inquiring of Elva if Mr. Clayton were at home? To which the child replied, "Yes, in his study, I will take you there."

"First ask him if he can see me now, Elva."

She tapped at the study door, and on being bidden to "come in," she exclaimed in a gleeful tone, "Here's Mr. Erlton,—he wants to see you."

Mr. Clayton rose hastily, and said angrily, "Why didn't Thomas come and tell me properly! I am not at home to any one this morning."

"I met him in the garden," said the child in timid surprise, "and, and, I told him you were here."

"Oh—well—let him come then if he *will*," and the child gladly escaped, leaving Mr. Clayton standing erect and bristling as if for battle.

The Rector entered, shutting the door carefully, as little Elva returned to the garden to feed his horse with bread and carrots,—much to the disapproval of the groom contemplating the soiled bit, but he felt instinctively that Elva was a privileged person, and endured it silently.

The conference in the study was a short one: the girls heard the study bell ring violently, Thomas was bidden to show the Rector out, and a few moments after they saw him kiss Elva and mount his horse rather hastily, his face pale and grieved.

"Mystery of mysteries!" cried Amy, and looked at Mabel inquiringly, but Helen drew her cousin away declaring that they might as well enjoy the shining hours in open air if Amy refused the wholesome pastime; but the latter declared she hated being left alone, and begged them to go with her to see Mrs. Macpherson about some new patterns she had promised to show her.

When they had humoured her as usual, for the sake of peace, they found Mr. and Mrs. Macpherson in the garden looking at the gold fish in the fountain, and Mrs. M. suddenly observed a dead one floating in the basin; whereupon she commanded her spouse to draw it out.

"I can't *quite* reach it, my dear; let me hold your hand, then I think I can lean over far enough," he replied.

Mrs. Mac gave him her hand, he leaned over as far as his small members would allow, but the fish was still just beyond his finger tips, and, just as Mabel was offering to try with her umbrella handle, his poor little feet slipped along the coping stone—somehow or other he not only fell into the basin himself, but managed to put Mrs. Mac off her balance too, and with a splash and shriek she followed him into the water,—much to the alarm of the fish, who took

refuge among the rocks ornamenting the pedestal of a little stone boy spouting up to the sky from bursting cheeks and fat lips.

Mr. Erlton was just passing at the time of the shriek, and came striding in to the rescue, while the girls helped to draw the unfortunate pair out of their very uncomfortable position; when they were in full view on the grass Amy's shrieks of laughter were uncontrollable, as Mabel and Helen respectively hastened to fling their own cloaks over the shivering and speechless victims.

Poor Mr. Macpherson, who had gone in undermost, had dived his head among weeds and moss in the base of the fountain, his hair fell in wet straight lines down his woe-begone little countenance, as he gazed guiltily and imploringly at his wife's angry visage. All she could do was to pant breathlessly, "You little, you little—" but wanting a fitting epithet she only shook him, while he gasped, "My dear! it was quite an accident; you see the fish wouldn't—I couldn't—*extremely* sorry—*extremely* so!"

"Come, sir," said Mr. Erlton kindly, "do let me advise you to remove your wet clothes quickly," and he hurried him into the house, while Mabel assisted Mrs. Macpherson with her clinging raiment, and hurried the maids to get warm baths ready,—after a while the couple were seated before a cheering fire, imbibing mulled claret which Mabel had prepared for them,—which so cheered Mrs. Mac that she allowed her spouse to smile over the adventure, and he besought their visitors not to hurry away; for in his own mind he trembled for the reaction after their departure, and its effects upon him. But Helen begged them to join the driving party to the beech-woods after lunch, and Mabel added a request that they would return with them for tea at Fir Lodge, so that their minds were fortunately distracted from the morning's mishap.

The chief rankle in Mrs. Mac's memory was Amy's pitiless mirth at the time of her overthrow into such cold and slimy quarters. It must be confessed that when the trio were walking back to lunch the

laughter which Amy indulged in was then irresistibly infectious, as the ludicrous picture of the soaked couple recurred again and again to their mental vision. Even Mr. Clayton laughed aloud at the recital which Helen gave him at luncheon, and Burton and Elva were beside themselves with mirth. By the time they met in the driving excursion the affair was held to be a good joke, Mrs. Mac feeling herself provider of "The entertainment of the week."

Mabel paid her accustomed visit when in the neighbourhood of the beech-woods to a poor old widow who lived in a small cottage near the finest tree in the woods ; giving her as usual a welcome gift of tea and sugar. Helen said they should all come and see the old lady, as she was quite a character ; they went in force to the door much to the widow's delight, her only grief was that she had not chairs for all, but when they were settled in sundry attitudes on stools, upturned pails, &c., she launched forth into stories of wondrous times of old "when the old burnt ruin was a castle full of gay gentlefolks." As they turned away after enjoying her quaintly worded histories she said to Mabel,

"Eh, but I hear that the Pairson is right clever over mending *clocks*, and does it for nothing ; I would be just greatly obleeged to you if you would send him *my* way, for though she's *goin'* now she *will* go two hours ahead." Here she pointed to a venerable and worm-eaten old clock in the corner of her kitchen, and continued, "I done all *I* could think of. I had her down and gave her a good dustin' and cleanin', and I *iled* her, and I took the bellows to her and blowed her inside out a'most,—and *would* she go? no, go she *wuddn't*, for *me* ! But my boy Milne, he's a rare hand at carpenterin' ever since he were twelve year old—and now he's fifty—he said 'she wants *coaxin'*, mother ;' and what with a little more *ilin'* and turnin' her wheels round with a skewer, he got her to start ;—but as I said, she is a good two hours ahead of the time—accordin' to the travellers this way ; and may be the Pairson can keep her steady for us."

They promised to ask the Rector to look in if he passed that way, and strangely enough they met him walking in that direction. He was passing with a bow, only, when they stopped him to give the message. A small boy was fishing at the end of the large pond in Lady Pailey's fields, and Helen watched him as the rest stood talking awhile. As they waited for her, she said, half to herself, "Fishing is *very* cruel, I think ; and I could not have patience for it either."

The Rector said in the same tone, as if also thinking aloud,

" 'Patience!' I wonder the copy-book texts do not enlarge the 'saw' into 'Patience is a *necessary* virtue!' "

"Do *you* ever feel the want?" cried Helen, incredulously ; "I should think *you* do not know what impatience feels like!"

"You are indeed mistaken," he replied, and unconsciously glancing at Mabel, who coloured as she thought of his visit to her father ; she remarked hastily in her confusion, and inwardly protesting at the unconscious condemnation of her father which had made itself known suddenly to her judgment—"Helen, *you* have patience! Ask Burton and Elva, who tax it often. The amount of anecdote they squeeze out of you is a proof!"

"Oh, that is mutual pleasure," disclaimed Helen, "my patience has never really been over-taxed."

There were only Mabel and Helen left now to watch the fishing and talk to the Rector, the others had strolled on, and as these words were uttered Mr. Erlton sighed slightly as he answered,

"You are the only one of *us* who can aver so much!"

"How do you know the amount Mabel has to endure?" involuntarily asked Helen.

Mabel felt that there was knowledge and deep sympathy, too, in the expressive eyes and grasp of the hand as he took leave of them ; Helen did not wait for any reply, and regretted the question.

The Rector returned late that afternoon to his quiet home, having impressed the widow greatly by his management of the refractory

clock. She told him gravely that he might really make a good living by such talent if he would only charge for it.

Let us take a peep at the interior of the rectory as he enters it and sits down wearily in his favourite seat in the window of the old study ; with a full view of the quaint old lawn and ancient yew trees, where squirrels played and blackbirds sang richly in the spring time, ending in the grey old church as a background, just over-topped by a faint outline of the distant hills. There is an air of home and simple comfort about the house, no trace of the " bachelor's lodgings " so often painfully evident in many such cases. Even the hall was carefully furnished and tastefully adorned in a simple manner, and a few plants and hanging baskets of ferns greeted one's eye on entering it. Everything looked spotlessly clean and quite fresh, according to the Rector's ideas and his good housekeeper's energy. A plentiful supply of books and a few pleasant pictures were in each room on the ground floor, and an harmonium, or rather American organ, stood in his study ; where a few visitors had enjoyed delicious harmonies when the Rector had time to play it. A good concertina was near it, but very little music was visible,—he played mostly by ear, having, to his great regret, never been allowed to have lessons when he was a boy ; his father thinking it a temptation to him to neglect other studies of more importance. After a few years of independence he had managed to pick up a fair amount of musical knowledge, but preferred playing by ear,—“ and from his heart,” as an admirer had said.

A servant boy brought him some tea and after a few moments' rest the Rector rose and took a small case out of a drawer in his writing table. A very lovely face was exposed to view as he touched a spring. A perfect oval countenance shaded by masses of sunlit hair, deep violet eyes full of happiness and loving light ; the slightly parted lips had a trace of weakness and indecision, but altogether it was no wonder that the Rector gazed at the picture with loving

admiration. A half sob escaped him as he laid it down, but his manner was composed and cheerful as a man in workman's garb was shown in by the boy mentioned before. At this hour Mr. Erlton was always prepared to see any one needing his help or advice. The man took the offered hand heartily, and yet respectfully, and at once urged his business, saying,

"The laddie is much worse, sir; the doctor is afraid he will not live the week out, and last night he had no sleep. This afternoon he said he thought he could bear his pain better and feel more restfuller like if you would come and see him this evening, and give him a tune and a hymn on your concertina, as you did before. He is that fond of music! So I made bold to ask you, sir; that is, if you can find it convenient?"

The sorrowful parent was first refreshed by a cup of good tea and some bread and butter, for Mr. Erlton knew he had come a long way to fetch him. Nothing was said about his own fatigue that day, when a sick horse had obliged his walking many miles; but with a cheerful "Come along then, Birdman, we'll go together," he left the house, telling the housekeeper to put dinner back an hour. When he returned he enjoyed it all the more for the thought that he had left the lad quieter, and very much soothed in spirit by his kindly words and sweet music. But even the often thoughtless page boy noticed his weary air and dragging footsteps as he entered his home, and informed the housekeeper that his master had "been and gone and done it too much this time," causing that good personage a great deal of concern, and some indignation against "folks who fetched him any hour and day to see them."

CHAPTER X.

A FORTNIGHT passed by, and Sir Robert was still at the Park, with his friend contentedly sacrificing town attractions to keep him company, while Amy and Helen were also accepting Mabel's invitation to linger at Fir Lodge. In spite of some inconveniences and disturbance, her father seemed to wish them to stay, and it had a good effect in sometimes rousing him from gloomy seclusion. But the real thawing process was little Elva's work, though none were conscious of it. Insensibly the loving little heart warmed all the corners of the once chilly home, chiefly because Mr. Clayton felt no false shame in yielding to the influence of a little child when she would try to win him into sociable intercourse; and as she grew merrier and less shy with him, her quaint sayings, ready assistance in the many ways a child can be useful to older feet and stiffer backs, won him to feel her loveliness and worth; he would often watch her romps with Burton with smiling interest, enjoying the sound of her peals of heartfelt merriment in her ringing, silvery laugh.

A party at Dr. Fentold's followed several small social meetings, but the doctor dined early, and this was a luncheon and tea entertainment, in which Burton and Elva were to join. After luncheon the company all adjourned to the old-fashioned garden which they admired and enjoyed to the kindly old gentleman's keen satisfaction. He and Mabel stood by the side of the old moat, watching the two children fishing for minnows under the huge autumn-tinted trees which hung lovingly, and now somewhat sadly, over its whispering water, as a spring bubbled up just there, and kept it fresh and full. Amy was impatiently listening to Mr. Macpherson, who thought to relieve her solitude as he found her pulling roses to pieces on the lawn, watching their frost-nipped leaves strew the grass in a pattern

at her feet. Lord Lawson had attached himself to Helen and two dogs at play with a pine-cone by way of a ball, her eyes gleaming dangerously—for his peace—as she laughed over their frantic rivalry when it left her hand and bounced over the smooth grass. Helen welcomed him merrily as he came near, thinking again how courtly and admirable was Amy's knight, and little dreaming how quickly his allegiance was becoming her own.

Dr. Fentold was called away, and as he left he gave Elva into Burton's charge for indoor amusement, as it was getting chilly. The children ran off to the house, while Mabel followed more slowly.

As she was entering by a side doorway, Sir Robert came out from a conservatory there; he came to her side, and said almost petulantly,

"Where *have* you been? I have been here, there, and everywhere, to find you!"

"Have you? But why! I have been with the children."

"The *children*, of course!" he answered, trying to laugh. "You and your cousin Helen are both cruel to your friends for the sake of those—well, I won't say nuisances, but *hindrances* anyhow!—I feel like Charles Lamb *re* King Herod, at times!"

"What is the matter? am I really wanted?"

"Yes, you are, truly," he answered, leading her into the conservatory, and adding, "I am sorry I said that about King Herod to *you*, so don't look so cold and grieved."

He stood still before her with her hand still on his arm, gazing into her face silently. She started a little, and asked wonderingly what he meant—was anything the matter at either home? He did not answer except by a more earnest look of inquiry, bending his face nearer hers.

She drew back, and was passing out again, when he placed himself before her, whispering passionately, "*Why* do you run away from me?"

"I misunderstood you, Sir Robert, I thought I was urgently wanted elsewhere."

"You *are* 'urgently wanted.' Do you remember what you promised me, Mabel?"

"No. What did I ever promise you?"

"On the hill, at the picnic."

"Well? I remember nothing of the promise."

"You promised to accept my regard. You must know what I meant!"

"I thought you meant what you said, Sir Robert."

"Nay, I cannot let you go," and he seized her hand and clasped it tightly.

It was trembling a little, for his excitable look and manner unnerved her, but she said firmly, though gently, "Release my hand, and do not forget that you have no right to keep me here, Sir Robert, when I *wish* to go."

But he did not believe her, and put his arm round her waist, drawing her closer to his side.

"My beautiful white rose! stay with me, and be my wife, for I love you, only!"

Mabel, hot and angry now, struggled to free herself, indignantly exclaiming,

"How dare you insult me so! Let me go instantly! I do not love you, I *never, never* could!"

He released her at once, and stood before her in mute and displeased surprise for a few moments, and then he cried out in quick sharp tones,

"You are not serious! Why should you be?"

"Quite in earnest," she answered gently, for she saw what a shock he was experiencing after his assurance and self-valuation.

"Mabel, you must try to love me. I cannot bear disappointment; you would not ruin me, surely! You know I have been indulged in

every way by my mother,—you like her, and are so sweet to her always ; marry me for her sake, and I will make it up to you till you shall love me for my own !”

“ You are talking rashly, Sir Robert. You would regret it afterwards if I listened to you,—if I married you without loving you ; and even for the sake of my mother’s friend I *cannot* do it.”

“ Does your *religion* teach you to spurn a strong love like mine ?” he muttered bitterly. “ But perhaps I offended you not unreasonably by my familiarity just now ; girls are not all so particular, and I forgot myself. Now forgive me, and say something kind to me, Mabel. Do give me hope !”

“ I cannot ; there is *none* ! I am so grieved to be the first to cause you the pain of disappointment. I should not suit your life either ; you must try to believe this, and forget me. Do not think I scorn your love,—but I never, never can accept the honour you would do me ; I know quite well it is an honour for any man to offer such a proof of real regard, and I am very, very sorry to vex you so.”

A hot and angry flush was on his face, but he bowed coldly and let her pass.

Mabel’s tender heart was pained deeply, she said, “ Good-bye ; let us both try to forget this, and be friends again.”

“ Oh, certainly,” he said, with a bitter smile ; “ do not think of *my* pain ! so many poor old tramps need your sympathy, and Sunday school brats are lamentably short of pocket-handkerchiefs ! And I dare say every one will not despise my love as you do !”

“ No, no ! only I cannot return it.”

She was passing out slowly, but he seized her hand and kissed it passionately and wildly ; then threw it angrily from him, for Mr. Erlton suddenly appeared and as quickly departed on seeing them and their attitude. Sir Robert rushed away, gnawing his moustache in extreme vexation, and when Mabel entered the drawing-room some time later on he was laughing and talking excitedly to Amy Rogers.

She heard him raise his voice as he saw her glance towards them while he complimented Amy in exaggerated terms on her pianoforte performances.

Amy's stage laugh repeatedly testified to her enjoyment of his conversation during a half-hour of music, but when Mabel rose to play Helen's accompaniment—declining to sing herself—he rose and whispered to his companion ; both left the room for the balcony. Mabel afterwards retired to a window-seat in silent contemplation of some views ; feeling tired and sad enough. Mr. Erlton came to her side, and informed her in rather a constrained voice that he and Burton had safely conveyed Elva to her early repose at Fir Lodge, then he said 'good night' and left the room ; to his great surprise encountering Sir Robert and Amy walking in the moonlight beneath the balcony stairs which led up from the garden.

Sir Robert returned his good-night very stiffly, and then said rudely, "You seem on the *prowl* to-night."

Amy laughed, and said, "Where's the doctor's boy, Mr. Erlton?"

"Do you mean Burton, or the surgery sweeper?" he said mischievously.

"How witty!" sneered Sir Robert.

"I mean Burton—I want to know where he put my gloves ; I gave him the charge of them when I was in the garden."

"Rather an insecure deposit," laughed the Rector. "Shall I find him, and if possible the gloves?"

"Yes, please," drawled Amy ; "I would like them here, my hands are cold."

The Rector did not express his ideas on the subject, but went back again and soon brought the gloves, also a message from Helen that they were waiting for Amy to go home, to which he received a saucy rejoinder to the effect that the early hour did not suit her just then. He only bowed, and left the spot.

Half-an-hour later the truant couple entered the drawing-room, the

doctor was deep in a game of whist, and younger people amusing themselves with round games and music.

Mabel leant back in the carriage listening to the cousins' animated discussion of events and people, but involuntarily started up in dismayed surprise when Amy proudly announced her engagement to Sir Robert Pailey. Helen was scarcely less moved, and said absently,

"I thought—that is,—I never dreamed that you really cared for him, Amy!"

"And perhaps you did not dream of his caring for me?" answered Amy, rather nervously.

Mabel said nothing, but her cheek was very pale. Love and marriage were such differently estimated affairs!

"Why don't you congratulate me, Mabel?"

"Congratulate you," murmured her cousin, half shuddering, "I—I—hope you will be very, very happy, Amy—in your future—"

"Why you are actually crying!" exclaimed Amy. "I really didn't think you cared so much for him! I am very sorry, but I can't help it, can I? But yet I might, that is—I really—"

"You misunderstand me, Amy. Do not take any notice now. I am tired—I must think—"

"Mabel, you do *not* love him!" cried Helen in doubt and despair. "Tell us now, we are all talking openly—or wishing to, of to-night's hopes—that is—Oh, dear, I *can't* speak out, after all!"

"I will give it up," said Amy, "if Mabel is—"

"You are mistaken *indeed*," repeated Mabel, "I never did, and never could love him."

"You are *always* true, so we believe it, do we not, Amy?"

"Yes, I suppose so,—but—well, let us say no more just now. What a queer world it is!"

When the sisters were in their room, Amy sat down and played absently with her gloves, her sister came to her side and stood silently

there for a few moments. Amy said half petulantly, "Why *do* you stand over me like a reproving angel?"

"I want you to be honest with me, and with yourself. *This* must not be child's play, Amy."

"Oh, don't *croak*! But, however, I think I will start fair with you. I do *not* care much for Sir Robert. I could easily give him up to Mabel now if she thinks she has been ill-used. I told him I was not much in love with him, and he is satisfied; I have many more chances than Mabel has."

"How *can* you speak of it *so*, Amy!"

"Why not? I am never sentimental."

Helen looked aghast. "I suspect that Mabel knew this, and felt sorry and shocked."

"I don't want her sympathy, and I don't care about her 'moral rectitude' ideas."

"But, Amy, for your own sake, *do*—"

"*'Do'* be quiet. I shall marry him if I choose, so now you know; but I am *not* going to talk any more about it now."

So Helen could only accept the situation for the present, and hope for better things.

Amy was defiant and reckless the next day, and begged her sister to forget all the nonsense they had talked last night, and to consider that Sir Robert was her brother-in-law elect.

Mabel was pouring out the coffee when the sisters entered. Amy knelt down before the fire as she said airily,

"I am going home to-morrow, Mabel; a letter to-day will prepare mamma to expect me. Helen can do as she likes about hurrying home, but Robert goes to-day, and wants me to be in London."

"I shall be very sorry to leave," said Helen, kissing Elva's white forehead and then her silken curls, as that young lady was pouring out hot milk at Mabel's elbow, "helping to *carve* breakfast," she said.

"Will you not want the carriage to take you over to the Park to-day, Amy?" was all that Mabel could think of as a reply.

"I don't know. I would rather she came here if she wants to see me. Perhaps he will bring her. I shall never like my mother-in-law whoever she may be! I hope Lady P. will not be troublesome."

After a silence, Helen put her arm in Mabel's as she finished her coffee-serving, and said, "When will *you* come to us?"

"Not yet, dear, thanks many."

"Amy, can't you wait a few days, and we will persuade uncle to spare Mabel too?"

"I could not come yet," repeated Mabel.

Amy glanced suspiciously at her flushed cheeks, but said in patronizing tones,

"You must come some day, and we will show you some life. Ah, Piccadilly! with all thy faults, I *love* thee still!"

Mabel laughed and replied, "Love is blind, so you will not mind about the autumn fogs you will find there now."

"No, not while I am having a good round *spend* in lovely gas-lit saloons. Oh, the delight of choosing a whole lot of dresses!"

"Poor *me*, the while!" cried Helen; "it is all very well for those who like shopping, but I feel inclined to sit outside in the air with the flunkeys, free from dust and crush."

"Oh, but you mustn't escape, Helen. When I can't quite make up my mind, in choosing, you *can* settle the matter for me generally the right way. You have got to know my tastes."

"Mabel's life is much better than ours," said Helen, as if thinking aloud, without noticing Amy's last words. "Will you try an exchange for a time, sweet coz? I will stay and take care of uncle."

"*He* would not be *aware* of the change, I believe," laughed Amy.

Mabel flushed again, but Helen kissed her, and murmured, "We know better than that."

"But, Helen, it is all very well of you to offer an exchange of duty,"

cried Amy, in mock astonishment ; " you would be sorry to find yourself taken at your word. We were not blind yesterday, and Robert's *shadow* goes to London with him, remember."

Helen crimsoned painfully. She was sensitive and shy, where Amy trod recklessly and boldly. But she noticed all the time that there was a tone of constraint in Amy's raillery this time.

Mr. Clayton's late entrance relieved Helen from making any reply, Mabel rose to kiss him and Elva took his morning paper from the fireside, where it had been drying after its misty journey, and placed it by his plate, following it up with a cup of hot coffee and spread toast, for which she received thanks now-a-days, and a smile as he stroked her hair.

Lady Pailey did not call that day. Her son did not appear till she had finished her late breakfast and was in a reverie by the fire, thinking as she so often did now of Mabel as her daughter, and of the probable change in her son's life. When he entered he looked out of humour, and began rather nervously to abuse the mist.

" One has compensations in London this vile weather ! the idea of being in the country now ! Where is Lawson, mother ?"

" He is in the smoking-room, I believe."

" Ah, I'll follow him soon.—Cigars are still left us ! I have news for you, mother."

Her heart fell sadly at his tone, but she only said, " Tell me, darling."

He walked to the window, and looked out, so she rose and laid her hand on his arm,— " Your face looks troubled, Robert."

He shook her hand off thoughtlessly, as he said bitterly,

" ' Troubled ! ' I ought to look the other thing. I am engaged to a very pretty girl—and you always want a daughter-in-law."

" Yes, if—"

" Oh, there are no *ifs* in it now !"

" Is it—"

"No, it isn't, so don't think about it. Be thankful for small mercies, mother, and welcome Amy Rogers as my wife."

"Did *she* refuse—"

"Who is '*she*'?" he cried angrily, still looking out of the window. "You give me cold congratulations, I think."

"But you led me to expect— Robert, all is not right with you in this affair. Can't you tell me more?"

"Oh, it's quite right, and will soon be tightly settled too."

Lady Pailey tried to speak again, but her voice went off into an hysterical sob as she went back to the fire. Her son threw open the window, saying, "Confoundedly stuffy rooms!" and stepped out into the mist. A few minutes later she saw him spurring his horse across the fields and leaping a hedge into the high road. Then she cried in peace, unrestrained, disappointed in her chief hopes and plans, miserably anxious about her son's future, also vexed at her coldness towards him in his engagement to Amy. "But he can never love *her* after loving Mabel!" she whispered to the leaping flames before her.

Lord Rencliffe entered an hour later. He noticed her sad tearful face at once, but did not show that it had struck him. He stooped down to fondle the cat, as he asked where Robert was.

"He is just gone out riding."

"Alone! We were to go and see General Lewis and his stud to-day."

"I am sorry. He will return soon though, I dare say," she said absently, and then with an appealing look in his face she almost whispered, "Has he told you of his engagement?"

"No! To whom? But I can guess. It is not surprising now that he forgot *me*! She is a nice girl,—I congratulate you, Lady Pailey,—I can't think why he has not told me though."

"Do you know who it is?"

"Miss Clayton,—as good as she is pretty, I believe."

"You are mistaken, too,—it is Amy Rogers."

Lord Rencliffe gave a smothered groan of dismay as he watched Lady Pailey's tears flowing fast again. He was silent for some time, and then said cheerfully,

"We must hope it will be all right ; it may clear up after all ;—it *is* a mystery now."

He settled her in his favourite seat with books and cushions, and said he was going to find her son, and so left her to her loneliness and disappointment ; wondering if Mabel had refused him, why any one should do that ! or if she had refused on her father's account only.

The two young men returned together at luncheon-time, but immediately afterwards said good-bye to Lady Pailey, and left her for London.

"We will take Fir Lodge on our way to the station," said Sir Robert, as they rode along, then suddenly spurring his horse he broke into a mad gallop, his friend followed, and it was only when they neared the village that Sir Robert drew his rein.

"That is a superb animal ! where did you say you picked him up ?" was all that his friend remarked, looking round for his own panting dog in the rear.

Sir Robert only answered by saying, "That gallop did me good, and cleared away the cobwebs !—Now for wooing and—"

"Well, what else ?"

"Oh, Lawson, I wish I could borrow your cucumber coolness !"

"Why, what is the matter ? Shy over your first engagement ? I would do the love-making for you if it were the *sister* !"

"You can do it on your own account."

"I am not sure ;—I will wait till I am."

"I wish I had— Bah ! nonsense !"

They rode on silently,—Lord Rencliffe now and then stealing a glance at his friend's face, which was dark enough till they reached their halting-place, then it grew bright with a fierce gaiety, and

his laugh sounded harsh as it reached the ears of the Fir Lodge party.

Mabel ascended to her own room before the two gentlemen were announced, leaving her father and cousins to receive them, but Lord Rencliffe soon asked Mr. Clayton to show him Elva's new pony and the stables. Helen sought her cousin, so the two "lovers" were alone, and Mabel wondered how the farce could be kept up now that the heat and impatience of last night's scene had subsided. She felt tears fall on her hand as Helen knelt by her side at the open window, and then the girls spontaneously clasped their hands in a grasp of sympathy, but neither spoke. A flush came to Helen's cheek as Mr. Clayton and his companion suddenly appeared on the lawn, where the autumn flowers bloomed sweetly in the now cleared atmosphere, sending scents of late mignonette and nasturtium to their place of vantage overlooking the lovely parterres.

The gentlemen looked up the moment they reached the lawn, and Mr. Clayton called out, "Come down, Mabel,—Sir Robert is here too."

"We had better join them now, dear Mabel."

They descended, but heard voices outside still, therefore they went through the library on to the lawn, and found Mr. Clayton pointing out a favourite rose to his visitor. Amy and Sir Robert were standing in the bay window of the drawing-room, and she noticed the flush rise to his brow as he caught sight of the group outside; his adieu to his *fiancée* was as chilly as the morning mist had been. He returned to the hall, saying he would get his hat and whip; a few moments later he joined all the others on the lawn, his head thrown proudly back, and a manufactured smile on his lips.

He just touched Mabel's hand; looking with feigned interest at the rose-tree as he greeted the two girls carelessly, and then bade his friend come away if he wished to catch the train. Mr. Clayton sighed again as he saw the two goodly forms walk away to the door where the horses were standing; but here a diversion occurred.

Elva was still standing by her pony, the saddle was on it as she had just returned from her ride, and Burton was patting its saucy looking head; Mrs. Macpherson entered the gateway just as the gentlemen reached their horses, and she called to Elva to bring the pony for her inspection. Lord Rencliffe whispered to his friend,

"There is plenty of time before the train goes, let us hear Mrs. Mac's opinion on ponies and their management."

The rest of the party collected there, the pony was duly admired by the inspectress, but she inquired as to its "mouth"—adding, "it is most important for a child to have a tender-mouthed pony; they all 'bolt' so."

"Oh, it is quite easy to stop him; you just try him,—*do*, Mrs. Macpherson!" said Burton, eagerly, anxious to establish the pony's reputation.

"The saddle is too small," said the lady, doubtfully.

"Only just to *try*,—you can perch on," urged the boy.

"Well, I don't mind,—just down the drive," and before any one could render assistance to the energetic lady she had "perched" herself on the tiny saddle, and put her knee over the pommel. But, alas, this was more than the groom had reckoned on, and the girths were not tight enough for the strain; the saddle slipped down the pony's side, and stuck half way, while Mrs. Mac gave vent to a shriek of dismay; Amy's peal of high-toned laughter added to the pony's alarm over such unusual proceedings, so off he started at a gallop, his burden clinging to his mane, her knee still held up by the pommel, and her left foot hopping madly on the ground at every bound. Several people gave chase in the vain hope of overtaking her, the two young men bounded as quickly as they could into their saddles and followed, but a little delay was unavoidable.

Quicker than any Mabel had thought of a plan and acted upon it. Running as swiftly as she could across the lawn she gained the side gate opening into the lane and met the pony and his nearly exhausted

rider as they came round the corner from the front entrance. She stood in the centre of the lane stretching out both arms, and speaking quietly to the frightened animal as it checked its speed ; a moment more and she held its rein, raising her hand to warn the pursuers to come quietly.

Sir Robert's face was white with alarm as he saw her standing there before the galloping little steed, and had shouted to her, "Great heavens ! take care of *yourself*." And now, while Lord Rencliffe tried to free Mrs. Macpherson from her position, he took the rein from Mabel's hand, saying, "My darling, were you mad to risk *your* life like that ?"

Mabel did not answer, fortunately the clamour of tongues drowned his remark.

Poor Mrs. Mac was "hoisted" off, as Burton said. She stood gasping for breath awhile, and then turned upon Burton, boxing his ears and shaking him afterwards, to which the boy submitted gladly considering her safety, and saying honestly, "I am very sorry ; it was all my fault," which so softened her feelings that she tried to laugh as she panted out her assurances. that no harm was done after all, and she "ought not to have mounted so quickly ; the *weight* was *nothing*, it was the *sudden* strain." Then she kissed Mabel again and again, calling her "a dear, sweet life-preserver."

By this time Amy was walking back to the house, unable to preserve gravity enough to meet the victim's eye, Mabel suggested a return for rest, and repairs to a rather damaged dress where the pony's feet had sometimes alighted, and the young men pursued their way to the station. A glass of wine and an easy chair soon put Mrs. Macpherson into a good humour, and she laughed freely over the adventure.

Lord Rencliffe looked in his friend's face as they neared the great city, Sir Robert turned his head away impatiently, but his friend said earnestly,

"Pailey, I have learned one good lesson down there,—Nothing but respect can perfect love. Can't you break off your foolish bond with Amy? Neither of you would suffer."

"Neither shall we if the bond continues as it is."

"I couldn't help hearing your words to Miss Clayton, old fellow."

"Then forget them,—don't notice them,—*she* didn't."

"Did you ever hear of the little boy who cut off his nose to spite his face?"

"Yes,—I am going to cut mine off."

"Would you have Mabel sacrifice herself to you as she did to Mrs. Mac to-day?"

"Yes,—I would make it up to her."

"Try again to make her love you first."

"You are only trying to make me break with Amy. Drop the subject, Lawson."

"Agreed—for the present."

"No, for the future. Look here, Lawson, I am quite sure now that Mabel will not marry me; she would like a parson, perhaps Erlton—who knows? It is equally sure that I shall never love any one as I do her, but I must marry, and mother will never be at rest till I do. Amy will not be exacting if I let her go her own way too, so you see a matter-of-fact view is the best thing to take, and I mean to carry it out. I don't care what becomes of me, and I don't care if you do think me childish and impetuous,—so *now*?"

"Very well—I have had my say, and must give up, I suppose. The thing is—"

"It is good-bye for the present; meet me at the club if you like to-night, we'll dine together."

CHAPTER XI.

TO return to Fir Lodge. Mr. Clayton returned to the house with a clouded brow, even angrily checking Elva as she was placing a fallen creeper in position round a wire basket.

"Don't spoil the border, Elva, get off it now!"

She only gave him a wistful look of protest, and then drew close to Mabel, holding her hand against her little rose leaf cheek as she said pleadingly,

"I promised Mary Brand my new story book to read. Will you go there with me to-day?"

"I cannot, my birdie. This is Amy's last day, perhaps I will go to-morrow."

"Oh, I'm sorry, because I promised it *to-day* if I *could*, and she will be looking for it now she can't get up."

"Mabel, I am going to walk to B——," called her father from his window.

Mabel ran in to help him as she always did on such occasions, getting hat and stick ready, and "seeing him off comfortably," as she always insisted should be done to any one leaving the circle.

"Oh, Mr. Clayton!" cried Elva from the lawn outside.

"Well, what is the matter?"

"Oh, *please*—I thought you would not mind having me."

"What *do* you mean, child?"

"Won't you take me with you to B——?"

"*You!* oh dear no. She couldn't walk it, could she, Mabel?"

"She *has* walked it once or twice," said Mabel, smiling at the lovely earnest face framed by the ivy round the window.

Elva's face brightened, "Oh yes; and I *do so* want to take a book to Mary Brand in the half-way cottage."

Mr. Clayton relented a little, and she added, "I'll be very good and not tease you at all, Mr. Clayton."

"Very well, I don't care," he said, glancing again at the eager little face, and feeling the warmth and brightness of the picture.

Mabel watched them away, wondering how it was that Elva had managed to thaw him so much: she could never venture on such a request when she was a child; but she was glad and thankful to see the change, while a yearning rose painfully too for Archie to be testing his softened nature once more.

Philip Clayton and his little companion went on their way silently, he engrossed in thought, she afraid of annoying him by speaking. She ran from side to side picking autumn blossoms here and there, and he soon forgot her existence as she was intent on getting a bouquet to give with the book. Once they had to pass through a heavy five-barred gate, he hurried on, unaccustomed to think of any feeble companion in his walks. In vain Elva tried to open it, her promise to be no trouble prevented her calling him back, so she tried to clamber over the barrier. Her short legs were unequal to the task, and she rolled over and over in the sandy lane beyond, but shaking the dust from her dress, and replacing her straw hat on the ruffled curls, she ran after her so-called guardian, hoping that he would not notice her scratched leg and soiled dress, keeping up rather a strained trot by his side, wishing he would think of little girls not being able to take long strides, and feeling almost ready to cry for joy when she saw Widow Brand looking out of her door, her motherly face anxiously watching the heated child.

Mary could see them approach, and said joyfully, "Here she is, hadn't you better go to the gate and take the book, mother? for Mr. Clayton won't like to wait."

The widow curtsied to Mr. Clayton as Elva gave her the book, and he said,

"You must not wait, Elva—it looks like rain."

"It *do*, sir, indeed. Won't you let the child stay here until you pass back again?"

"Oh yes," cried Elva, "I can show Mary my favourite stories!"

"Certainly *not*," was his reply, "you must stay under my care, Elva."

Had the widow seen the amount of care hitherto displayed her indignation would have been greater than it was now, as she answered, "Indeed, sir, she'll be safe enough here."

"Oh, I don't know about that—come, Elva, you said you could walk it."

"Never mind, mother, he does not know us," said Mary, tearfully.

But Mrs. Brand *did* mind, and she followed the two retreating figures with angry eyes as she noticed how Mr. Clayton strode away, Elva running now to keep up with him.

"He's a fine one to talk about *care*, he's running her blessed little poor legs off!" she cried indignantly.

The clouds had gathered thickly as they left B—— half-an-hour later, Mr. Clayton only waiting a few moments at the Bank, and hurrying home again. Little Elva thought ruefully of the long way to be *run*, she was hot and tired, but as the rain now began to fall in large drops he quickened his pace, and she gasped out, "I am rather tired, Mr. Clayton—will you—please, take my hand?"

He did so, saying impatiently, "You ought *not* to have come! and I have no umbrella!"

Soon it began to pour large cold drops through the trees vainly overshadowing them with injured autumn foliage. Elva's dress hung limp and wet against her knees, but the rain felt refreshing to her heated face. Her feet and legs ached terribly, and every breath seemed to pain her panting chest, but she struggled desperately on, afraid to speak or cry, clinging on to the cold thin hand she held. Suddenly carriage-wheels were heard approaching, a four-wheeled dog-cart came to their side, drawn by a fleet chestnut horse, and Mr.

Erlton's voice came from under a huge umbrella, saying, "Mr. Clayton ! and poor little Elva too! *Pray* get in ; the child is exhausted !"

But Mr. Clayton walked on haughtily, with Elva's hand in his grasp.

"Mr. Clayton !" cried the Rector, walking his horse, "*do* think only of the *child now* ! If you will drive her home I can walk, if you object to my company."

"You and yours have done too much for me and mine already,—I do not care to increase the debt."

"But Elva is wet and exhausted,—you would like to ride home, eh, Elva ?"

"Yes, so much—only I promised to be good—" and then a burst of tears choked her voice.

Mr. Clayton stood irresolute and angry, he began to fume and trample, but Mr. Erlton quickly descended, and disengaging the tiny hand, he soon lifted Elva to a place of rest under the umbrella held by his groom with one hand, as he restrained the impatient horse with the other. The Rector turned again to Mr. Clayton.

"Do get in—you are very wet. You will save your daughter some anxiety too."

"What the—— What have *you* to do with my daughter ! is it not enough to have—"

"Hush—remember our hearers."

Mr. Clayton walked on again, so the Rector sprang up beside Elva, holding her to his side, but not speaking.

Mabel met them at the door, asking for her father as she received a very wet little form in her arms.

"He is coming on foot, by choice ; you might send to meet him, perhaps he would be glad by this time. I will order a horse, or trap, to go, if you will attend to this little soaked fairy ; her wings are quite limp, poor little fay !"

He left at once, murmuring to himself as he entered his house, "Have *we* nothing to forgive !"

Mr. Clayton's spirits were as limp as his clothes when he arrived ; Mabel ran to meet him, and received a very sharp salutation for allowing Elva to go.

"Why did you inflict that child on me? you might have known it was too far for her,—and now she will have a fine cold, I dare say. Where is she?"

"In bed. There is some hot soup ready, I will bring some to your room when you have got your wet things changed, there is a fire there."

"Is the child ill?"

"She is very tired,—I suppose the rain made you hurry too much."

"She did not tell me she was so spent, but she ought not to have gone at all!"

He had scarcely left her, when Burton came rushing into the hall as the door still stood open.

"Oh, Miss Clayton, I suppose I may come in? I *am* soaked. I have been to Honeysuckle Lane to get this meadow-sweet for Elva. Where is she? I must not wait, or I'll get gruel for a month from old Martha, to cure a cold which she will believe in firmly, whether I get it or no."

"Elva is in bed,—she got wet through too."

"In bed! Oh, I say! is she *ill* though?"

"No, but I am afraid she will be."

"I shall ask father to look in here to-night as he comes from the school, he goes there twice a day to see young Pym."

"Very well, if he is passing he might come in,—but I hope she will not be seriously ill."

"Give her some treacle posset, Miss Clayton,—*that's* the thing to make a fellow feel able to sit up! My love to her with it."

Elva looked pleased when she saw the flowers, but very soon closed the weary eyes again, and lay back, now hot, now cold. She

had taken some warm tea, and her head ached less, she said. Mabel sat down by her side, hoping that sleep would soon come as the best restorer. Helen came softly to her side, and they watched together.

"There is Mr. Clayton calling!" cried the child, starting up. "Oh, no, it is only that *spiteful* clock!"—an alarm clock in the servants' room was running down by mistake or accident at 6 P.M. "Is he angry with me, Auntie May, *very* angry?"

"He is sorry you are so tired, darling; now try to sleep and forget all about it."

"I'm *very* sorry I broke my promise and worried him so! I think I shall have to cry a little more before I go to sleep!"

Mabel tried to soothe the overwrought little mind, unstrung completely by fatigue and alarm, but it was late when Elva slept.

When Mabel bade her father good night, he said abruptly,

"Did *he* come in?"

"Mr. Erlton? no—he was very wet."

"That was his own fault."

"It will do *him* good to get a little damp," said Amy, laughing, "it will perhaps take the stiffness out of him."

"I didn't know he had any in him," said Helen.

"Oh, he freezes me into constrained propriety, and I'm *tired* of him."

"I think he's charming," replied Helen, and the next moment she was startled by the angry rush Mr. Clayton made from the room, banging the door after him, quite forgetful of Elva's need of quiet.

"Mabel will be fully occupied nursing the child," continued Amy, "she is sure to be ill; it is a good thing I am going. I hate a hospital! How anxious Mabel looks."

"No wonder. What would she do without Elva?—she is everything to her now."

"I don't know. She left the room very quickly when I was speak-

ing of Mr. Erlton,—almost as quickly as her respectable papa did a few minutes later.”

Dr. Fentold had looked in, but Elva was then sleeping, though the flushed face and frequent uneasy movements made him look grave, and he said he would look in next morning.

Soon after Mabel had lain down in her own bed beside the child's the latter woke and called plaintively for “Auntie May!” who was by her side in a moment.

“Please take the blankets off, I am *so* hot.”

The burning cheeks which Mabel kissed were dry and hot indeed, and now “water, please, *lots*,—I am so thirsty,” was the next cry.

Mabel watched and tended the little one all night, and anxiously waited for the doctor's promised visit,—as early as possible he had said. She went down to receive him, and he noticed her pale wistful face.

“Come, come,” he said, “this won't do! You must rouge your cheeks and polish up your eyes with sandpaper before I come again, or I shall order you to bed too.”

Burton had come with his father, and was full of regret and concern, he waited below impatiently enough while the little patient was visited.

The doctor looked grave when he saw the amount of fever she showed, but his face was hidden from her and her friend. When he raised his head he said cheerfully,

“Well, birdie, you will have to stay in this pretty nest a few days any way, to warm you *quite* through and through till you toast all that rain quite out, you know.”

He led the way into the morning-room, there they found the cousins and Burton. The latter caught his hand, saying,

“She's not ill, father? Don't say she is very ill!”

“She will be, my boy; but Miss Clayton will prove a good nurse, I am sure, and that is a big step towards mending the mischief.”

"Well, doctor, wouldn't you like *me* for a patient?" inquired Amy, flippantly.

"No, my dear young lady,—the fewer the better—for me."

"Ah, you are rich enough to be a medical exception!"

"For shame!" said Helen. "I am quite sure Dr. Fentold's heart was as large as it is now before the fortune came to his pockets."

"Thank you, my dear. I have known what poverty is,—cold lodgings and cold fare; but I hope it didn't make the mainspring contract."

He found Burton already in the dog-cart, his eyelids looking suspiciously red. His father said nothing to him as he drove off, and seemed always interested in the fields on his own side of the vehicle till after the boy had again brushed his coat-sleeve across his eyes, then he said,

"Cheer up, my boy; I think we can all pull together to bring the little darling round, please GOD."

"You see, father, I always wanted a little sister to take care of, and it was so jolly having Elva,—and—and Mrs. Mac is always saying—that—that she 'will not live to be a woman.'"

"Mrs. Mac should put the muzzle on at times; she cannot possibly tell for certain,—so drive the clouds away, lad, and look up *trustfully*, any way."

The doctor said to himself, "His heart is too tender, I fear. I hope it will always be true, though; he's a boy to be proud of at present—thank GOD!"

CHAPTER XII.

ELVA became very ill ; the frail little body seemed to be sinking under the fever's raging attack, and hope was almost gone. Mr. Clayton was very much concerned, but he said little, only his relief when a change came could not be concealed. He often insisted on more frequent nourishment being offered her to battle with the utter weakness which followed the fever, when Mabel was quite worn out with nightly watching, and suffered Mrs. White to take her place alternate nights.

Dr. Fentold and Burton had been twice daily ; the latter was allowed to see the little girl for a few minutes each time, always bringing offerings of late violets from his father's greenhouse, or a bunch of acorns or other field treasures yielding fresh out-door tastes of Dame Nature's life. Mr. Erlton also sent or came daily to inquire, and sent loving offerings too.

Mr. Clayton had not seen the child since their disastrous walk together, until one day when she was getting a little stronger she saw him passing her open door and called him by name. He hesitated, shrinking strangely from meeting her again till she should be well enough not to disturb his conscience more than he could help. The sight of the wasted form and features was a keen shock to his nerves, and self-reproach for his carelessness woke again. She held out her arms as naturally as she did to all her visitors now, and put them round his neck, saying sweetly,

"I am so glad *you* didn't catch such a bad cold. I suppose it was because you are big and strong, for you were in the rain longer than I. You *should* have come with us—we came *so* fast! and the umbrella kept all the rain off."

"I am so glad you are better, Elva. It would have been better after all if I had left you in the cottage."

"What cottage?" inquired Mabel.

"Did she not tell you all about it? Why the woman at the half-way cottage wanted her to stay there till my return, but of course I couldn't tell what harm she might hear or get there,—of course I couldn't!" he said in desperate defence against himself.

Elva looked puzzled; Mabel said quickly,

"Oh, there is no fever about this year; but I suppose the rain was not falling then."

"No, not *quite*," answered Elva, "but never mind now, Mr. Clayton, I am very happy now, only tired. Burton is coming to play dominoes presently, and oh! Auntie May!"

"Well, darling?"

"There is some one else I should *so* like to see; guess!"

"Mrs. Macpherson?"

"Oh *dear* no; guess, please!"

"Tell us who it is, and we will fetch them," said Mr. Clayton, smiling.

"It isn't '*them*,' it's Mr. Erlton."

Mabel looked inquiringly at her father, and Elva continued, "Will you ask him, Mr. Clayton?"

He looked at bay as she raised herself on her elbow and gazed beseechingly into his face, then he moved towards the door, but returned to the window and looked out.

"Indeed, I feel well enough now," the weakly voice pleaded.

Mr. Clayton answered by giving her a pat on the head, then turning to Mabel, he muttered quickly, "Anything to please her, you can send a message to him."

He left the room hastily.

"Auntie May, I don't think that Mr. Clayton is fond of Mr. Erlton as we are?"

Mabel did not answer except by a kiss.

"I don't think he is, Auntie May, he *never* speaks to him. I

love Mr. Erlton, don't you? He is always kind to every one, even little girls like me. Sir Robert isn't. One day when I was saying how kind Mr. Erlton was, and that he had promised to let me hold the reins when I drove out with him again, after that first day he met me and Burton, blackberrying, and drove us home, Sir Robert popped me outside the window so quickly and said, 'Little girls should be seen and not heard,' and then Miss Rogers said, '*Seen* as little as possible too.'

As children so often do, little Elva had felt the wound, so carelessly given, much more deeply than older people of coarser mould imagine.

Burton came in to turn the subject, and after a short and quiet game of dominoes Mabel asked him to take a message to Mr. Erlton in Elva's name, which he gladly promised to deliver. The Rector came that afternoon, lovingly greeting the little girl, and laying a large handful of pale yellow chrysanthemums in her lap, as he looked pityingly at the signs of suffering and weakness on the white face bent over them.

"Dear little Elva! there isn't a very '*large* kiss' to be had I fear, just yet!"

"Isn't there room for it on my cheek?" she smiled brightly as she spoke, and held his hand lovingly to her face.

"The cold wind blew all the roses away from it that day we were driving home after getting so heated," he continued absently, as Mabel poured out three cups of tea at a small table by the fire.

"Where are your cousins, Miss Clayton? I have not seen them lately."

"They returned when Elva was first ill. Mrs. Rogers was anxious to have Helen too, so she followed Amy the next day."

Elva was sorting her flowers, and cried joyfully, "Ah, here is a sweet little rose in the middle, it will just do for the front of your dress, Auntie May; please give it to her, Mr. Erlton."

He obeyed rather nervously, and Mabel grew pink-cheeked once again as she took it from him. He was thinking of the scene he had interrupted in the doctor's conservatory, and returned to Elva's side, but looked again at the lovely tea-maker, and said in his natural, quiet, pathetic tones,

"Elva, you have frightened away somebody else's roses too; you must try to get strong now to bring them back again permanently, I hope; not only the reflection of the one you have just given."

"Yes—dear beautiful auntie has been awake so many nights, you see. When you are ill you should let her nurse *you*; she's *so*—"

"So afraid your tea will get cold," hastily interrupted Mabel, and as she raised the child a little more on her sofa the rose fell from her dress into Mr. Erlton's hands.

He held it tenderly for a moment, and she put her small white fingers out for it. A moment's hesitation, and again his memory presented the picture of them lying in Sir Robert's palm, and receiving his passionate kisses. He was giving it back again when a leaf fell from the rose. He put it carefully in his pocket-book as she pinned the other in her dress.

A glance into her eyes seemed to give him more ease, he said almost humbly,

"Life is full of riddles, patience is the watchword still. Eh, little Elva, you have been learning the lesson, teach us now."

Elva laughed her coo-like laugh. "You *are* making fun, Mr. Erlton!"

He stood by the couch, watching the process as Mabel helped the weakened child to take her light evening meal, and the picture was a very sweet one. He had often seen Mabel about in the parish, and of late frequently in social gatherings,—and even in church it was always a pleasure to see her and her little charge with pure and reverent faces taking their part in the services that were his delight; always had he been struck by the fairness and sweetness of the in-

fluence on sight and sense, but never had his heart called out as it did now for the bliss of possessing and protecting her.

Mabel had avoided him as much as was consistent and possible, in obedience to her father's wish, but this was not surprising considering the attitude taken by her parent, and instinctively each felt the difficulties in the way of free intimacy. The invitation to come and see Elva would have filled the Rector's heart with hope had not the scene in the conservatory been ever present as a cloud on his mind.

He said suddenly, "I thought you were to go to London with your cousins, I heard so before Elva's illness. I suppose you will all be disappointed ; as your friends from the Park went too you would have had a home circle, almost, again."

He watched for a consciousness to show itself in her cheeks or eyes, but there was none.

"Helen was disappointed," she answered, in her usual tone, "but I promised to go when Elva is well enough."

"And this sovereign little lady?"

"She goes too, if I go."

"You will like that, Elva?"

"I don't know.—I didn't like London when we were there when we came home from abroad ; there were no pretty fields nor flowers growing ; but I like to go where Auntie May goes."

"We will not go till you get some roses in your cheeks, my pet," said Mabel, as she laid Elva down again to rest, and Mr. Erlton prepared to go.

"You will come often, *very* often, won't you?" said Elva, holding his hand tightly in both her tiny ones.

"If I may—I saw a large bunch of grapes at Mrs. Macpherson's, which she said I was to tell you were coming to you when ripe enough."

"Auntie May gives me grapes."

"But you will like Mrs. Macpherson's too?"

"Yes,—if she doesn't scold Auntie May, and talk *very* loudly when she brings the grapes."

"*'Scold Auntie May!'* Is scolding agreeable to you, Miss Clayton? Some people can take a great deal, as if it suited them."

"I do not digest it well always, I fear," said she, laughing a little; "it depends on the administrator."

"If I had the privilege of authority over you I should exercise it now in scolding perhaps."

"What have I done? The 'voice of the church' shall have due weight," she said, looking almost merrily into his face, but on seeing how grave he looked her eyes dropped, and a lovely pink colour shone in the firelight.

"It is nearly three weeks since you were seen on the *outside* of Fir Lodge. Are you anxious to test Dr. Fentold's skill?"

"I am quite well, thank you for your 'scolding';—it hasn't hurt me!"

"Nurse says she *ought* to go out for a walk sometimes," interposed Elva, "but she likes to be kind to me now I am ill, and I *do* miss her when she is away a *minute*! but I mustn't mind it now I'm better. Dear beautiful—"

Mabel put a large grape between the lips which were uttering the thoughts concerning herself.

Mr. Erlton turned to the window, and seeing a sprig of late yellow jessamine blooming outside close to his hand, he bade little Elva hide under her sofa blanket a minute, very quickly opened the window, and plucked the sprig, giving it to Mabel as he said,

"If you will not go out we must bring the scents and freshness in to you."

She played with it a moment, and Elva entreated on emerging from her shields,

"Ah, put it with the rose in your dress; it *is* pretty so! My rose

and Mr. Erlton's jessamine !—But, Auntie May, *why* did Sir Robert put that little flower you dropped in silver paper, and put it carefully away ? I saw him ;—pansies are no use when they are dead, are they ?—they don't smell nice in a big vase, like rose leaves."

Mabel crimsoned as she felt the Rector's eyes turn suddenly and searchingly on her for an instant only, and a recollection of his appearing at the conservatory door darted into her mind painfully now ; also a recollection of Amy's departure the next day but one after her engagement to Sir Robert, and probably no one knew of it yet, as Elva's illness had engrossed all attention. But a keen desire of explaining the circumstances to Mr. Erlton took possession of her, she could not bear that *he* should think of her for a moment as willingly accepting Sir Robert's love and attentions, so she stroked Elva's cheek and murmured,

"I dare say he threw the pansy away soon, dearie. If he keeps any flowers now they will be those Amy gives him."

"Oh, yes. Because she is going to marry him. She told me she was going to."

"Did she, darling,—when ?"

"The morning after Dr. Fentold's party,—she asked me if I would like to be her little bridesmaid."

The Rector's voice sounded very cheerful as he bade Elva good-bye, and promised to come and read her some pretty stories when she was a little stronger.

As he left the room he said to Mabel,

"Forgive me for asking a question which may pain you,—Have you *any* news of your brother ?"

"None,—alas *none* !"

"Nor—of—his wife ?"

"No—no. How *much* I would give for any !"

The tears came fast, and she laid her head beside Elva's as she returned to her couch. He lingered a moment before he went away,

Elva had dropped asleep immediately in the reaction of fatigue after his visit, and lay like a fading lily, watched over by the gentle spirit who looked almost as childlike as herself in her sweet purity and grace. He came back to the side of the child, and said ever so earnestly and reverently,

"GOD *bless* you, and help us all to wait trustfully!"

In her heart she thanked him for his blessing,—her heart bearing many a thorn-prick, though hidden like those under the green leaves encasing the rose at her breast.

It was with no ordinary sisterly love that Mabel clung to the memory of her wild brother. In their childish days he had been her only friend and companion, and she had felt so proud of the handsome, spirited boy, who yet had been very dependent on her for help and sympathy when he dared not apply to his father, and would not trouble his invalid mother with his boyish difficulties. Mabel's ear was ever ready, and her sympathy always lively and at his service; and even when it was necessary to gain a favour from their father, she would bravely risk denial or displeasure in pleading for Archie, though with fear and trembling. It was a bitter chill to her when amid the interests of college life he forgot something of the old home love, chiefly applying to her for help in difficulties of a monetary character, and placing her in the front of the battle when Mr. Clayton received the bills for extravagance and pleasures with which he could not in any way sympathize.

Burton had the pleasure of reading to his little friend on the day following Mr. Erlton's visit, and it was a pleasant sight to see the children together. They were certainly a study in contrast, though his sturdy health showed up little Elva's frail beauty painfully to Mabel's loving heart. He helped gently and quietly to serve the early tea, and was solemnly affected with consternation when he saw how little Elva could eat of the tempting morsels offered her—even sponge cake being barely tasted.

Mr. Erlton's present of an amusing book was duly appreciated for a while afterwards, and as Mabel was gladly joining in their mirth Mr. Clayton came to the door and asked for her attention as he cast a sad, and for a moment a wistful look at the boy's bright face. Ah, if he could only forget another boyish presence once there! He repressed a remorseful pang which rose with stinging power, and smothered a voice which was muttering within him, "It is your own fault that life is so shadowed now." He noticed how their laughter ceased in his presence, and how fear came with a cold chill in the place of free love and warm sympathy. After a few words with Mabel he left the room, and on entering his study caught sight of a letter lying on the table. He turned angrily to the bell, and inquired of the servant as to where it came from.

"A boy has just brought it from the rectory, sir. He said there was no immediate answer to take back."

"Very well,—go! don't stand staring there."

As soon as the man had closed the door, the letter was placed unopened on the fire, but as he watched its destruction two words stood out plainly among the shrivelling ashes, they were—"is dead." He sank into his chair as if he were struck—was it Archie who "is dead?" The thought unmanned him; he was seized with a sudden fear that Mabel or any one else should see him now, so he hastily put on his hat and strode away towards the open common; but just before he reached it his mood turned to anger and annoyance, for the Rector suddenly met him face to face, and at once spoke gently but earnestly.

"Mr. Clayton, have you seen my letter?"

"Yes, sir,—and burned it unopened."

"But stop, pray! The contents—"

"I know nothing of the contents, I tell you; I will not hear anything from you."

"Mr. Clayton, I cannot let you—"

"How dare you molest me, sir? Let me pass!"

"How dare *you* nourish such revenge, such a spirit of unjust wrath towards me?" asked the clergyman very quietly, but in a voice which made Philip Clayton wince uncomfortably.

"Don't preach to me! I will tell you why, in terms your clerical ears will not appreciate, if you do not let me alone!"

He stamped his foot in childish passion, feeling the searching, sorrowful glance that was upon him, but before either could say or do anything further Mrs. Macpherson's pony carriage swooped down upon them, and gave Mr. Clayton the opportunity of escaping,—much to the astonishment of the lady in the driver's capacity.

"Is Mr. Clayton flying from me, or you, or both of us?" she inquired, in a mystified voice.

"Ask *him*," replied the Rector with rather unsuccessful attempts at amused indifference in his tone.

"You both looked as if you were quarrelling over a conspiracy," she said, looking curiously at him.

"Indeed? Don't you find the wind cold driving on the common this morning?"

"Oh, so you wish the matter to 'blow over,' do you!—very well, but I must say Philip Clayton is a great study for me. I have been over to see Lady Pailey; of course she is in the dumps now the sun of her sphere is gone. I do not fancy he will shine on her again for a long while."

"Really?" answered the Rector absently, as he looked after the tall thin figure striding hurriedly away in the distance.

"No,—I will confide my reasons for thinking so to your clerical keeping. I believe that he was refused by Mabel Clayton, and flung himself into an engagement with Amy Rogers out of passionate pique."

Mr. Erlton gave her his full attention now.

"It was only settled at the last moment, and I think Mabel foolish

to refuse such a man considering the emancipation it meant. I must be off now though, for I have workmen in the house, and Mac is no good in looking after them. If he saw them idling hours away he would only think it natural, or perhaps offer them chairs and pipes to enjoy their rest."

As she drove off she shouted back, "Come and see me soon. You don't half do your duty as to 'Mon Repos.'"

He would have gone earlier willingly to have heard the news she had to give him. A cloud resettled on his face, however, as he considered the small chance of such news altering the look-out in his future while a spirit of implacable resentment placed a cruel barrier in his path. "Patience," he murmured to himself as he entered his house, and thought how a certain gentle presence would lighten it. He did not go again to see Elva till the jessamine had lost all its blossoms, and roses were no longer obtainable for the sick child, for Elva continued a dainty specimen of fragility and weakness, and Dr. Fentold said it was a mere forlorn hope to try and restore her to her former state of health, especially remembering that her brother and sister had died of consumption; but she could now leave her room, and Burton spent his spare time with her, reading and playing endless games of draughts—little Elva could not grasp the mysteries of chess with ease, so it was abandoned.

"Mr. Erlton has forgotten me, auntie."

"No, darling, he often sends to ask after you."

"Yes, I know,—but I mean, he has forgotten to love me—or perhaps I know what it is! I think now that Mr. Clayton won't let him come here."

"Then you must be content, dearie, to wait until he does let him come; but it will be better not to ask for it yet, any way."

"I am glad he does let Burton come! Please sing to me, auntie, I feel rather naughty."

The rich sweet voice stole through the room, and reached the ears

of the solitary occupant of the library. It was twilight, and his book was laid by as he sat staring blankly into the fire—the clock seemed to say in aggravating ticks, "*forget, forget, forget.*" Mabel's song changed to an evening hymn, and he could hear the words plainly now, and Elva's weak tones joining in like a distant vox angelica blending with a rich vox humana stop in an organ :

" That with the world, myself, and Thee,
I, ere I sleep, at peace may be."

It moved him strangely, the soft-breathed word of "peace" coming like a dove outside the closed window of his heart, and trying to get settled there. He rang hastily for lights, and read without grasping any sense from the words before his eyes.

Autumn trailed her dull and damp way through each quiet day. Elva's strength was increasing, but the cough which seemed to tear Mabel's heart grew more settled, and a dull fear hung over the near horizon of Mabel's life. Elva was her one object of interest now, all others seemed to fade in spite of whipping up her moral powers of energy and duty.

And even Mr. Clayton was more gentle and solicitous now. He would come into their morning room and stroke Elva's sunny curls, listening to her happy voice or to Burton's reading, though the boy's voice always sounded unnatural then, and a sigh of relief came forth when the chilly presence was withdrawn.

One day Mabel was surprised by a spontaneous kiss from her father as he was leaving the room and passed beside her as she prepared some egg and milk for Elva. She threw her arm over his shoulder, and kissed him heartily in return, but he did not speak as he hurried away nervously.

She stole out after him, trying to take advantage of the thaw in his manner—"Dear father!"

"Well, Mabel?"

"Let us bear our troubles together.—Shall we not try to bear them with cheerful bravery and patience?"

"I am not naturally cheerful—and I think I have been no *coward* under disappointment."

"I did not mean that; but you are not happier for keeping trouble so locked up."

"Shall I give Mrs. Macpherson the key?" he said bitterly, "perhaps a wholesome airing might follow?"

Mabel looked grieved as she said, "No, no—not in that way!"

"Well, then you and I need not talk over our wounds by way of healing them, and don't you worry over *my* share."

"No, papa. But please remember I *have* a share and *can* sympathize with you—though—"

"Though what?"

"I may not say more, papa."

"You *need* not—I know every one blames me!"

He caught his breath in something like a sob. Mabel could only kiss him again, with rather a convicted look on her face.

"You and Elva make quite a fool of me; don't discuss this again, Mabel!"

Bang went the study door as she left the room, he holding it for her to pass, but Mabel felt that the thaw had begun, and in spite of his parting injunction could not help hoping that he would again show more softness in his grief—and then, ah, then! a vision of Archie rejoining them gave her courage anew.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEW SCENES.

CHRISTMAS had come with its present joys and past memories before Mabel could think of leaving for a visit to her cousins. Early in the new year both she and Elva started for London according to Mr. Clayton's firmly expressed desire, and Elva was to have a noted physician's opinion and advice. During a drive for "good-bye" purposes they met the Rector, and he seemed to find it difficult to answer the child's many questions as to his absence, for Elva seemed to think she might freely interrogate him, though Mr. Clayton was to be an unquestioned ruler.

Mr. Clayton himself missed the sweet merry voice more than he could understand during the first few days of his solitude. It was absurd, he said to himself, considering his seclusion generally in the silent regions of his own rooms, but a blank that made itself felt reigned in the house.

Mabel had looked rather aghast at the term he fixed for her return, viz., early in March, but she silently left it to future circumstances to decide if she should be absent so long.

Helen was waiting for them at the station in town, looking very bright and quite handsome. A very loving welcome shone out of the depths of her fathomless eyes while she greeted them.

When they were in Mrs. Rogers' carriage she wrapped little Elva very carefully in the extra shawl she had brought, saying, "There, you little snowdrop, you may only put your nose out in the air this cold morning."

Elva laughed a muffled laugh, and Helen said, "How are all your friends—especially Burton and Mr. Erlton?"

Mabel left Elva to answer.

"Oh, Burton is quite well. I had not seen Mr. Erlton for ever such a long time until this morning—and he looked sorry rather, or ill."

"Why 'not seen him for ever so long?'"

"I don't know, and he didn't seem to know very well."

Helen glanced at Mabel, who was looking out of the carriage, with a flush on her cheeks and distress in her sweet eyes.

"Now, Mabel, I have news for you."

"Of whom, dear?"

"Of my worthy self."

"Tell-tale blushes solve the riddle for me, I believe," answered Mabel. "Is it—"

"Yes, it is. I am very, very happy, of course, and the world is aglow for me, of course, and you are delightfully comfortably right in guessing my riddle, I feel sure."

"I need not say what I feel and hope for you, Helen darling."

"No—it is taken as said. Lawson is—another of course—perfection in my eyes just now, and when I discover his faults I am sure they will only be very nice little faults!"

A cloud settled just then over the sun as it plunged once more into fog wreaths, but Helen was too happy to care, or even notice it.

Elva's sharp perceptions had been working over the last speech, and she asked with eager interest,

"Are you going to marry Lord Rencliffe?"

"Yes, little fay. Don't you think he is very nice?"

"I like him much better than Sir Robert—"

"Well, what more, sweet mite?"

"But not nearly so well as I like Mr. Erlton."

Helen laughed good-humouredly. "So he is your *beau ideal*, is he?"

"I don't know what that is—is it a very good thing to have?"

"Charming, if it proves true."

"Oh, well—he is *quite* true, I am sure."

"Even though he never came to see you for ages?"

"Yes—because he said he *wanted* to all the time, but couldn't."

Mabel turned the conversation by asking after Amy and her plans.

"We will talk about her later, dear. It has been a very gay winter, and Amy has been too happy to make any plans, I think, letting things drift on as they are."

"And Sir Robert is in town?"

"Yes, and gay, too; more gay than happy," she said as if to herself, with a sigh over "poor Amy."

Mrs. Rogers looked very prosperous and contented as she met them in rich silk and lace. Mabel only dimly remembered her aunt since the childhood's days of their last meeting; she noticed her great likeness to Amy. That young queen of society was out riding with a General Faversham.

"Come to the fire and have some tea at once," said Mrs. Rogers, "my *dear* Elva! spare my head-dress!" she cried, in dismay, as Elva, who was prepared to find "Auntie Mabel's auntie" a very enchanting person, clasped her little arms round her neck, and unfortunately the lace lappets falling there received a drag which brought the Paris "top knot" into jeopardy of falling off.

Elva was ashamed and penitent as Mrs. Rogers continued, "By the way, Helen, I have only *just* received this article—a new style, and I put it on for your approval—but you don't seem to notice it!"

"Oh, yes, I noticed it, mammy dear—it suits you very well, I think," said Helen, but in rather a constrained and apologetic tone, as she glanced at Mabel uneasily. "But we must warm up our travellers," she added briskly; "now, Elva, tea and cake? *Very* plain kind here for little snowdrops!"

"Madame Tilné always suits me well, doesn't she?" murmured her mother, arranging her cap afresh as she stood by a large mirror which frequently had to give evidence to her and Amy. "You see, my dear Mabel, I keep my complexion and hair in such comparatively youth-

ful order that it is incumbent on me to dress accordingly. Helen, on the contrary, cares nothing if she is quite unfashionable sometimes, she has a preposterous love for 'an old *gown*,' as she calls it. I do hate that word—a dress is not a gown now-a-days."

"Here is Amy, your show daughter, mother," said Helen, mischievously, as horses' feet were heard prancing outside, and they saw her checking her horse suddenly and making him show off a little ere she dismounted, aided by a somewhat *blasé* looking elderly man who glanced at the window with a peculiar air and smile, Mabel thought.

"Here you are at last!" was Amy's greeting, as she entered, rosy-cheeked to such an extent that Mrs. Rogers exclaimed,

"Amy, you ride *too* fast, my love,—such a colour is really a *little*—you know—"

"Oh, don't fuss me, mother! Well, you small fry, so you have been ill?" said the beauty, pinching Elva's cheek; "I suspect it was all a sham to get more petting, and a lot of nice things to eat,—now wasn't it?"

"Her poor little *faded* cheeks show it was not that," said Mrs. Rogers with foolish solemnity in her tone, which made Mabel come quickly to the rescue, saying,

"Oh, but we hope to forget sickness and medicines now—especially when a very great London doctor has helped Dr. Fentold's work on while we are here, and wonderful London sights are taken as medicine, eh, Elva?—a dose of Zoological Gardens as a tonic?"

"I have had a stupid ride, mother—I'll not go again with that old fossil, and not another soul did we meet to take the chill off."

"My dear Amy!" cried her mother, with real vexation in her tone, "I cannot—!"

"Oh yes, I forgot your leanings towards the old gentleman, but I do hate a dead level of elderly boredoms!"

"Sir Robert came for you, and if you had remembered his appointment it would have been livelier for you."

"How can I remember such trifles?" answered her daughter with mock carelessness.

"Will you come and take your wraps off, Mabel?" interposed Helen, as Amy began teasing the cat with her whip, and murmuring languidly, "He hates the General!"

Mrs. Rogers was roused against her favourite daughter for once. "You treat Sir Robert cruelly, Amy!"

"Let me alone, mother. I am digesting slowly the fact that he has not treated me quite fairly."

"What do you mean? I insist on an explanation."

"It is of no consequence, let things slide on."

"I don't wish such a desirable match to be allowed to slide *off*, Amy."

"Don't you?—I don't care, 'so there now.' I hope Mabel will not monopolize Hewett this evening unpacking and dressing. I could not undertake to do my own hair—life isn't long enough for such a worry."

She dragged herself languidly up stairs, and found her share in the maid was uninvaded by Mabel.

"Don't bother me much over dressing to-night, Hewett; there is no one I care about among the dinner people to-night."

"I beg your pardon, miss," was the reply in a hesitating tone, "Sir Robert is, I think, in the list of cards on the table, because—"

"Well, never mind—give me my book, and don't pull my hair more than is necessary."

When Hewett reached the nether regions of the household, she remarked in a fair copy of her young mistress's drawl, "Miss Amy *is* wayward to-night."

"She's a *contrary* article!" assented the respectable but not respectful butler; "if I offer her claret she'll shrug her shoulders as if I were offering her vinegar, and if I offer her sherry she snaps out 'Claret,' as if I were a fool! She ought to have a husband with a mind to thrash her!"

"Really, Mr. Bond, don't be vulgar-minded!"

"I've no patience with her," growled the man—"I wouldn't submit if it weren't for Miss Helen."

Mabel found herself in a whirl of novelty and excitement. A daily chase to kill time, and very little to show at the end of the day as trophies or improvement in health and spirits. Mrs. Rogers' complete worldliness and Amy's recklessness were only in a measure balanced by Helen's real earnestness and longing for better things to live for, and for which she hoped and waited, telling Mabel in confidence that had not her engagement to Lord Rencliffe opened out gates of hope, and visions of usefulness, she must have made a plunge into hospital nursing, or such like work.

Mrs. Rogers sent for Helen about a week after the cousin's arrival for an interview in her snuggery, as she called it, a room full of pretty trifles, like its owner's conversation; she was lounging in a morning wrapper, sipping her late cup of tea, while Mabel and Elva were gone to see a physician.

"Let down that blind, will you, Helen? I cannot make servants understand how trying it is to sit in a glare!"

The mild winter's sunshine was not more than a pleasant amount of cheering influence in that way, Helen thought, but she darkened the window and came to the sofa, covering her mother's languid form carefully, for the morning was raw and cold.

"Yes, my feet are rather icy.—Now I wish to talk to you about Amy. Do you think she will marry Sir Robert?"

"Mother, I am unhappy about her.—I cannot think she *loves* him!"

"*That* may come, and most likely it would if she were settled; I asked you if she will *marry* him. The dear General thinks—"

"*He* cannot understand Amy,—and I think real *love* would satisfy and settle her, mother; the only ballast for her in her present mode of life."

"Don't be romantic and unreal. It is a common-sense fact that

girls should marry before they are getting a wrinkle if they wish to keep a devoted husband, and Amy's brow is getting a line in it."

"Well, mother!" said Helen, rather sadly—

"Don't *mourn* over it, but try to make Amy interested in her trousseau. I am disappointed in Mabel, she doesn't seem to sympathize with Amy, or to have a good effect in spurring her on to marry while fortune wooes her in the form of Sir Robert, and I must say I think you overstated Mabel's merits—I can't see anything in her."

"Her worth is not pinned outside for easy inspection, mother dear. It takes time to see its fulness because she is so very modest in mind and manner, but when one is able to enter into her private life, as I have been, it is enough to take one's breath away to see the good she *does*—apart from the goodness she is! You know her father *does* nothing but read and walk, Mabel has all the management of everything as to house and grounds; even the grooms and gardeners come to her for orders, and there is never any fussy responsibility in her conduct of affairs. Then she has secular as well as religious classes and clubs under her direction, amongst others a 'Pickwick Club,' which keeps a lot of the youths out of mischief, and which they enjoy thoroughly, instead of lounging and swearing at street corners in the evenings, for the members of the P. C. have to give up certain disreputable habits or they disgrace the club as well as higher callings; so half in fun and half in earnest she rescues those whom more serious measures would fail to take hold of at first. Then every one in the village comes to her for help, advice, or sympathy."

"Evidently she makes herself a great deal too *cheap*, my dear."

"Well, then her *patience* and attention to Uncle Philip!" continued Helen, warming.

"Pray! pray! I asked you for help as to Amy, not for panegyrics on Mabel!"

"Very well, mother,—but I have tried to turn Amy's thoughts and purposes seriously to alter her present course of behaviour as to Sir Robert, but she refuses to listen even."

"Then I must consult the dear General, he is a man of the world, and understands my feelings as a mother, in such things."

Helen could not help feeling that his real sympathy had about as much ground as that of the undergraduates to whom a young clergyman was preaching an old sermon and forgetfully retained the words, "Those of you who are *mothers* will understand this fully," but she sat silently awhile as her mother turned her attention to the morning paper, and then she went to meet Mabel and Elva, and to hear the report as to the latter.

Elva's enjoyment of London scenes had been great, and her health had not suffered under the excitement, owing to Mabel's judicious regulations concerning it. No late evening hours were allowed in the programme for the child's amusement, and Helen took care that her food should always be as wholesome and nourishing as possible.

One drawback was not to be mended,—the noise of almost nightly entertainment rose to the child's bedroom, keeping her wakeful as she tried to separate and distinguish voices, listened for Mabel's songs especially, and took general interest in the different phases of the doings below. When Mabel stole up to her room in any interim she always found the little arms ready to clasp her neck, and the eyes quite sleepless, in spite of efforts to yield themselves to obedient slumber.

Amy winced at the discovery that the pretty country cousin, as she called Mabel, was as much sought after, perhaps more so than the London belle. Jealous of her supposed rights, she fumed at the absence of any of the gaucheries she had expected to see, considering Mabel's "exile from London style." The indefinable influence and charm of utter self-forgetfulness in word and manner irritated her

keenly, especially when she saw and felt how much Sir Robert was drawn again within the circle of the old spell, greatly to Mabel's discomfort, and Amy resolved triumphantly to hold him revengefully captive in the bonds he had so hastily riveted for himself. "As mamma says, it *is* time I was married, and I don't see any better game than Sir Robert in view; I *must* have a little fight with his mother now and then to relieve my feelings *when* imprisoned there."

Thus she soliloquized one evening on contemplating Sir Robert hemming Mabel into a corner behind the backs of several gentlemen discussing a fashionable beauty and her doings, over which there was something of an argument as to her supposed *fiancé* and his doings, and the group had quickly increased and cut off escape for Mabel before Sir Robert had claimed her attention to some book he had taken up for the purpose. Mrs. Rogers' "society instincts" hunted out the matter when she saw Amy's abstracted gaze, and she called out briskly, "Where is Mabel?—I must ask you to come out of your corner, love, and sing to us, please."

The deliverance was worth the tone of the request, and Sir Robert was foiled.

Helen certainly was very happy. Lord Rencliffe was completely devoted, and treated her with manly care and tender respect. He and Sir Robert were still great friends, much alike in pursuits, though not at all in character, the one so hasty and impetuous, the other cool and in fact generally imperturbable, with a quiet power of self-reliance, and to some discernments a tinge of selfishness. But whatever he was, he had won rare depths of love and trust from Helen Rogers. She accepted his worship with sweet happy dignity, Mabel thought, as if she felt ennobled by his choice and love, while the depths of her dark eyes shone with happy trust.

Sir Robert was at her side when Mabel left the piano, and he determinedly accosted her with a question as to her opinion of his

mother's health. A gentleman offered her a seat between two girls near, and she took it at once, Sir Robert standing before her and using now his old familiar patronizing tone; but immediately afterwards the two young ladies left their seats for a glee performance, and he at once took possession of her in a different manner.

"My mother is still as fond of you as ever?" he asked sentimentally.

"We have not quarrelled, certainly," answered Mabel, trying to laugh lightly, but conscious of Mrs. Rogers' detective eye.

"Of course not—but I wondered if my—that is if anything had changed the old feeling. I should be sorry if—"

"Will you help Amy to find the glee they want, Sir Robert? she is seeking it."

"No, I want to talk to you."

"Then I shall tell you an unpleasant piece of my mind! Lady Pailey's best medicine is a sight of her son. Can you not give her a small dose of it now? The country is dull for her in January; you could hunt at any rate, as one amusement."

"*Now!* go down now—while *you* are—"

"I must go and see Elva," interrupted Mabel, rising, but an old lady secured her for a chat on a subject in which Mabel had given her some information before, and she was detained till another song had to be sung to please General Faversham. She felt that Sir Robert's eyes were upon her as she sang, and he joined the General in grateful compliments when she finished, and then added, "I like you to scold me, please go on the same way as you did just now, before that old tabby captured you."

The General laughed, and turned away.

Sir Robert continued, as he watched her face, while she meditated an immediate escape,

"Is that prig of a parson still preaching, and teaching little boys and girls to be hypocrites?"

He marked the indignation in her eye, and the flush in her cheek, and his tone grew more bitter as he added quickly,

"I beg your pardon, I forgot what a long and easy running *he* gets with his fair parishioners."

She answered as quietly as she could, "You forget more than that, Sir Robert, please try to remember what is due to CHRIST'S messenger, and to your own dignity. But Amy is going to sing, and I think she is waiting for you to take a part in that duet."

"Thank you for reminding me again of my *duty*," he said hurriedly, as Mabel escaped at last through an opening in the crowded room.

When she returned, Sir Robert was paying assiduous attentions to Amy, and remained at her side until after another song from Mabel had called forth a loud buzz of admiration, when she found him again near, and murmuring,

"I was mad enough to be rude to you this evening, madder still to hope I might yet turn the scales in my favour!"

"You must *not* speak to me like this!" she answered, decidedly, moving from him.

"Nay, *now* I *know* it is useless since your eyes and cheeks answered my attack on a certain saint! I knew that I had nothing to fear from Amy as an obstacle, if I really wished for liberty again. She has no heart."

"She may have more than you think, or than you can appreciate or *understand*," cried Mabel indignantly, among the hum of voices; "how can you insult my cousin through me?"

"Well, never mind—it is all over now,—I will hand this, *valueless* now, to your keeping as a proof of my appreciation of real *graces*. Good night, Mabel."

To her astonishment he laid a small packet in her hand, he had just taken something from his breast, folded neatly in tissue paper. She opened it at once, sheltered in her crowded corner, and a dried camellia fell out and lay at her feet. Little Elva could have solved

the mystery. Mabel had forgotten the circumstance of its falling from her hair and being secured by Sir Robert long ago. She looked across the room where Amy was laughing now, with Sir Robert's likeness rising and falling on her white neck, as it lay in the gem-encircled locket he had given her. Mabel was as puzzled as much as pained by his behaviour; in the quiet philosophy of Fir Lodge life such mad folly had never been in her dreams of possibilities, and real pity for Amy exceeded all other sentiments. "She *cannot* know what she is doing so recklessly!" went through her mind constantly with painful repetition; yet Amy sometimes rallied her openly on her keeping hold of her former slave and encroaching on her, Amy's, preserves; turning aside any serious discussion of the case.

When she again met Sir Robert he adopted a casual manner, though often his cheek flushed and he pulled his moustache impatiently the while he was in her presence,—which happened as seldom as she could manage such escape from the family circle as would be allowable or polite.

Helen had accepted the proposal to return with Mabel and Elva, which was much ridiculed by Amy, and specially as she really objected to losing Helen's services in the housekeeping department. Things were never so comfortable in her absence, as both Mrs. Rogers and Amy strongly disliked such duties, while Helen took them cheerfully.

One day after the discussion on the plan, Amy said pettishly,

"What *are* you dreaming about, Mabel? You are up in saintly cloudland, I'm sure."

"Indeed no," she replied, laughing brightly. "I was cogitating over mutton, beef, &c., wondering if my father had been properly treated in that way lately."

"How you can waste ideas on trash like that with so much ardour I can't conceive. I wish people could eat grass like sheep!"

"I am afraid our storerooms would have to be considerably enlarged to take in a prudent stock of hay," laughed Mabel.

"Well, it has amusing sides, that question," replied Amy. "I can see you in my mind's eye offering Mr. Erlton a thistle with his cup of afternoon tea."

"I would not rob the poor donkeys," said Mabel quietly, "the other animals would not let them have anything else under your *régime*."

"Dear me!" sighed Amy, with languid contempt, "*some* people have no heads!"

"Some people have heads and nothing in them," laughed Mabel, still good-tempered over the small shaft aimed so low.

"Some people have no hearts," said Helen, more warmly than usual.

"You have something wrong somewhere, to go flicking off to the country now, Helen! You *must* wait till the London season is over."

"And all the spring in the country lost! No, thank you, now I have a chance of escape into primrose clumps!"

Lord Rencliffe came in as the last speech was uttered, and warmly proposed a general exodus for a few weeks.

"I am invited to the Park for any day and time," he said; and then turning to Sir Robert who had followed him into the room—glancing round uneasily till his eye fell on a bowed hazel-brown head in the window-seat. "Come, Pailey, your mother invited me chiefly because it is likely that I take the prodigal son with me; you see you can fulfil duty and enjoy love and friendship down there."

"Without my share in either," cried Amy.

"Will you let him come for a few days' leave then?"

"As many as he likes," she yawned.

Mrs. Rogers glanced uneasily at Sir Robert, but he said, "I shall not go—my health does not require it, nor does Amy's complexion,"—but there was pique in his tone.

Amy noticed it, as did others, and she perversely exclaimed, "I am not so sure of that, at any rate I *ought* to look yellow!"

The brown head in the window bent lower over the book held rather nervously in two dainty white hands.

Mrs. Rogers chimed in with a request to be kept in countenance by one daughter at any rate, when Helen immediately volunteered to stay if Sir Robert and Amy would like to go.

"Oh, no,—save your generosity till it is more needed," cried Amy.

When March came, Helen accompanied her cousin to Fir Lodge, leaving Amy deep in engagements and Sir Robert more attentive, with a sort of indifferent *laissez aller* look.

Mr. Clayton was actually at the station to meet the trio, and what with the unexpected honour and the fresh air of home Mabel's spirits rose, and her greeting was brightly affectionate. Mr. Clayton looked thinner than ever, but his face broke into a smile as Elva ran to his arms. As they passed the rectory Mr. Erlton and old Mrs. White were just meeting there, he waved his hat gladly in answer to Elva's shout of glad greeting to two friends and her old home, but Mr. Clayton whipped up the horses to a faster pace, much to Mrs. White's regret at least.

"He might have let them stay a minute, I'm sure," she murmured, "*that* ain't Miss Clayton's nor the sweet lamb's way of coming back to old friends! Leastways, if grand London folks and ways haven't turned their minds."

"It is not likely to change their *hearts*, Mrs. White," said he, rather absently.

Among the first callers at Fir Lodge were the Macphersons, who were warm in their welcome home again, the lady saying,

"Really, Mabel, I did not think you were such a necessary part and parcel of our world here; I was bothered to death by appeals for news of Miss Clayton and when *would* she be back,—for this, and that, and the other were stopped, or hindered, by her absence. I pity you when you take up the reins and accounts again, and I do think your clubs and things are a blessing, after all, for they clear the street corners and put every one in a good temper; Mac has been as cross as ninepence since you left."

"My dear! I felt a little *dull*, without the cheering sight of Miss Clayton and Elva."

"I wish you would be cross sometimes,—it would be an excitement, any way."

Mr. Macpherson looked as if the experiment would be more novel than safe, while his spouse asked Mabel in a whisper if she had no little secret to tell her, "about London people, or a London *person*, rather?"

"Nothing in that line for you," answered Mabel, smiling at her eagerness.

"*Really?* It is marvellous considering your attractions bursting out at last into broad daylight ;—they are smothered here."

"If I had any I think they would soon be smoke-dried in London."

"Nonsense! But, Mabel, if I thought you held any absurd notions of celibacy, as I believe Mr. Erlton does, I'd—*whip* you!"

"Do you prefer to use a cane, or what shall I bring you for the purpose!"

"As to Mr. Erlton, I have tried all I can to bring him and Miss Conway together," said the elder lady complainingly, "persuading him to see her home after social meetings when I could catch him, even placing them in convenient crowded corners at tea, and it is all no use; he keeps her at such distance, though very respectful to her, looks at her as if she were a fly on the ceiling,—and then to see his face soften and his violet eyes glow with such lovely tenderness when he speaks to Burton or a little school child makes me feel rabid, because it shows he *has* a heart and tender feelings. Miss Conway is only a little older than he is, and I'm sure proper enough for a clergyman's wife."

Mabel turned to inquire about other people in whom Mr. Macpherson might be supposed to have some interest, but his wife interposed,—"Oh, Mac never knows anything about anybody, and if he does he is afraid to tell it. But speaking of Mr. Erlton, you will be glad

to hear that he is getting more and more popular, and he really does work hard. If any one is seriously ill and sends for him, he will go miles in any weather at any time ; though *he* says it is only duty, like a doctor's. But he is often very heroic, and so quietly. No one knew for a long time that it was he who saved Miss Brett in that awful fire at their farm, as she was insensible and the crowd so great and such a dark night ; and his hands were skinned from handing pails of water over the wall from the well, no fire engines in time, of course. And he saved some boys who were bathing and got amongst the weeds drowning. He was very nearly lost himself then ! But I am making you quite pale with all these dreadfuls. But really you must give me a wedding soon to stir up our stagnation here ; whom *can* I persuade to make the mighty conquest !"

"Did you arrange the match between old Mrs. Richley and young Porson ?" asked Mabel, mischievously.

"You horrid little creature, no ! If I tried to *mar* matches, I would begin there, only it will serve him right if she leads him the life she did her departed Alfred."

Mr. Macpherson sighed a sigh of sympathy. "Shall I practise the *mar*-match business on *you*, Helen ?" said his wife, continuing her harangue in Helen's direction.

The young girl laughed a defiant laugh, as she continued to smother Mabel's skye-terrier in the sofa-cushions.

"You would not succeed there better than in the opposite direction."

"You think not ?"

"I *know* it !" in a proudly happy tone.

The doctor and Burton soon came to greet the cousins, Burton and Elva going into the garden to exchange confidences as to London wonders and country pursuits, the boy ending his remarks with a protest as to the little good he could discover in the change to Elva.

"You don't seem any fatter or rosier, Elva ! You *must* get well

by summer-time, when my tutor goes, and we can have the holidays out of doors, and such fun !”

Alas ! no more merry romps or fishing excursions for little Elva ; the rosy tints on Burton's canvas must not remain over the distant scene.

Mr. Clayton had returned to his old silent ways in spite of Mabel's politic endeavours to keep up the thaw. One morning she entered his study with a pale cheek, and very gently said,

“ Papa, I *must* tell you something sadly interesting to me, and perhaps—”

“ Well, don't keep me waiting for it.”

“ In an old cemetery near London when we were driving out and looked about the place for an hour I saw a tombstone—”

Mr. Clayton started, and put his hand up as in self-defence between them, and his eyes rested again mentally on dead ashes of a paper and two dreadful words.

Mabel continued as she hid her face in his shoulder, as she stood rather behind his chair,

“ On it was inscribed this—

TO THE MEMORY OF

HELEN,

THE BELOVED WIFE OF ARCHIBALD CLAYTON.

“ And,” she continued almost in a whisper, “ the verse followed, ‘ I will be a Father unto you.’ ”

She waited in tearful silence while her father closed his book and laid a nervous hand on it.

“ Dearest father, Archie is *alone* now !”

“ I am mostly alone,” he answered drily.

The unjust tone of martyrdom pained her, but she only said,

“ I think I ought to tell you something else, he—”

“ Who ?”

" Archie."

" I will hear no more ! I have forbidden the mention of his name. What if his wife is dead ? My love for him and interest in him is gone."

" Oh, *no*, papa—not really, not really !"

She had instinctively felt that he was relieved when he learned *which* name was on the tombstone.

" Yes, I say. Leave me, Mabel, at once."

She obeyed with sinking hopes, the last lever had been tried in vain ; and a despair began to cloud her prayers, but she struggled against it, saying, "*His* mercy endureth."

But surely "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," and the gentle spirit of Philip Clayton's daughter wrestled wearily as she retired to rest that night, striving to keep her thoughts from bearing in judgment on her father's conduct. "Honour thy father and thy mother" had no qualifying clause hanging to it, she knew well, and the "yet" of repining questioning would rise again and again, and while she prayed for that father's guidance from on high, he was pacing his room, trying to set aside, but in vain, the echo of the tombstone's reproach, "*I* will be a Father unto you, saith the LORD." Had Archie placed it there as a silent reproach, or had *she* desired it, to speak comfort to her lonely husband ? A new light began to illumine the word "Father," and it threw his own fulfilment of the privileged trust into gloomy shade ; but the pride of a life-time stood in the way of reparation. And then the recalled vision of a beautiful face shrinking from him to Archie's side came between him and sleep. Had its tender outline been reduced by poverty ? Was it now sleeping in death because he had turned away his only son to find want and sorrow ? "If so, am I to blame ?" cried pride and self-will,—and conscience answered "Yes," and conscience would answer "Yes," and keep him tossing and sleepless on his bed till morning light was creeping over the top of the fir-trees on the hill-side.

CHAPTER XIV.

SPRING came with its many sweet voices and tender tints, congratulating Helen for being in its own domain of beauty instead of in the crowded rooms she had haunted so wearily.

Sir Robert had come to the Park for a week or two after all, much to his friend's relief and his mother's delight. Amy had on several occasions positively declined the invitations of Lady Pailey's indulgent kindness, declaring that she had too many engagements to think of leaving London for months ; so with a disappointment added to her lot Lady Pailey dragged on her lonely life, often cheered now by Mabel and Helen during a few hours of the lengthening days ; but somehow when they were gone the shade of regret settled in deeper lines on her brow, and impossible "ifs" cried out in her heart. She could have blessed Lord Renclyffe aloud for the influence that brought her son at last, though she did not see much of him, and once or twice when he fled back, "to do duty in London for an hour or two" he said, she always feared his remaining there, and when he returned he was always bitter and cynical. After a visit from Mabel one day, she being ignorant of his sudden freak to come down, he stood looking gloomily after her graceful little figure as she left the gardens, biting his moustache until his mother laid her hand on his arm, saying,

"Robert, *do* confide in me ! *Does* Amy really mean to go on with this engagement, and is it too late to try—"

"Mother ! you will drive me *mad* ! It is no use harping on a broken string. Let me alone."

He never avoided meetings with Mabel, but with his old weak self-indulgence hovered near the flame though stinging pain and bitter regrets were renewed each time he fanned its powers to life again. Mabel was as distant in body and manner as she could manage to

be considering the presence of the two lovers visiting at the respective houses, and of course not to be kept apart. Mrs. Rogers seemed to be the only anxious one respecting the date of Amy's wedding, it was not fixed yet, and Helen was likely to be the first to leave the London home.

One day Sir Robert was standing gloomily looking out of the window as usual when he was in his mother's company, like a restless schoolboy longing for escape from lesson books, when she was startled by his saying half to himself, "I shall decide it all next week."

"Decide what, love?"

"Whether, and when, I shall marry."

The rain came down heavily as he spoke.

"By George! Here's a flood! It will be a damper on Lawson's devotion, I should think. He and Helen are out riding."

"He is devoted, Robert."

"Yes—you mean I'm not?"

"No, love. But I can't say that Amy is!"

"Don't you care to receive her into your motherly embrace?"

"I will receive any lady my son brings."

"But you would rather it were some other lady?"

"I would rather it had been one other,—but you had no patience to win her."

"But I have lost her, mother, and once for all do not speak of this! I am feasting my eyes awhile with her sweet grace and beauty, but they are not for me."

"A mother's love is often very foolish, Robert—mine has been full of hope so long as Amy is so indifferent and Mabel free."

"How do you know she is free? Ah, never mind. Amy and I can get on, and that must be sufficient."

She saw him striding through the rain across the lawn a few minutes afterwards.

When he returned from London the next week he informed his

mother that he had settled with Amy that their marriage should take place in July, and that they should travel on the Continent then for several months at least before coming to the Park. "I will have her in better training than, mother," he said, laughing, but a harsh, unreal laugh.

"I will not check her taste for company, Robert; let her have all she likes here."

"Yes, and I shall increase my hunting lot."

No thought of his mother's comfort under the new *régime*, but it was her own hand that had led him into self-pleasing, so she did not notice it.

"Helen is to be married at the same time, mother. She says it will be so much nicer to be outshone, and therefore unnoticed comparatively."

"Well, well, tastes differ—but I *beg* your pardon, love—I—"

"No offence, mother. Amy would, I fancy, relinquish any *lady's* fancy and admiration without much regret, so long as she holds her own over the other sex."

"Certainly Helen is—"

"Oh, yes, Helen is handsome, but very peculiar. However, Lawson can keep her in order, I fancy! Perhaps he can make her a little more gracious to me—though small matter to that, as Pat says; I don't live by her favour."

"She will make a good wife, I think."

"Humph—Possibly?—'Parmi les aveugles les borgnes sont rois.' Confound that fellow! is he *eating* my horse, I wonder, instead of bringing him? I'll wake him up. Bother your long dresses!—I *beg* pardon, mother, but you shouldn't—!"

"You *need* not have stumbled over it, dear, I think, in this large room."

Considerable damage was done to the garment in question with heavy boots and spurs entangled in the cashmere, but he did not wait

to inspect his work, and Lady Pailey enduringly passed to her room to change the wreck for a whole dress. The groom received the remainder of his master's ill-humour and a month's warning for five minutes' delay.

The two friends were riding together, when Sir Robert said,

"Lawson, you are quite a different fellow these last few months."

"Ah, really?—Let me return the—no—*not* a compliment in *your* case, I must own; but do you mean that *I* am improved?"

"People who know, or rather who *knew* you, would think you slightly reformed."

"'Tis sweet Helen, my friend, who has worked the charm."

"Well, you seem to find it easy to be good-tempered, any way."

"Sweet Helen's influence again."

"What would *she* say if she knew all? She has a higher standard of right than a good many girls have, and wouldn't like to haul down her flag, I fancy, to even an inch in such a case."

"But she never will know all."

"Humph!" said Sir Robert sententiously.

"Interpret the 'humph,' please, Rob."

"It was long enough before she forgave me for violating her album of sanctum sanctorum fancies—I wonder how long she would take to forgive your—"

"Well, my what?"

"I can't think of the name *she* would call it by."

Lord Rencliffe tightened his reins, and drew in his lips very tightly.

"That is why I *dare* not tell her."

"And yet even my slight knowledge of female rectitude convinces me that you would do better to risk it, Lawson."

"Nay, nay, give me a cigar, old fellow; there is nought in life left me but a cigar and sweet Helen. I can't *risk* losing her."

"And you feel *sure* of *her*," said his friend sadly and absently.

"My lad, she is the distilled essence of truth itself."

"And therefore—"

"Therefore I needn't tell her any more truths, you see."

"Well, guard your precious jewel!"

"I mean to till I make her my own home truth."

"Anyhow, I think you are laughing over an unexploded mine, Lawson."

"Yes? Ah, but she will never know."

"Well, I think I am going in to be a real earnest woman-hater, by way of novelty."

"Are you? Come for a ride with Helen and Mabel first. I am going to fetch them."

"No. I should try to break my neck if I go in my present frame of mind."

"Oh, then don't come."

"I could do it for half a farthing."

"Don't. It would frighten Helen, and she wouldn't look so handsome if she were paler."

"Confound your coolness! Give *me* some."

"Go and hold Lady Pailey's knitting-wool, and learn to be a good husband by practising the initiatory good son."

They parted here, but ere long the chestnut mare brought Sir Robert to his friend's side again.

"Why, Pailey, you ought to have been a fair lady, you change your mind so often."

"I must come this once—I will be a good boy later on."

The two girls and their horses were in the garden already, and while Lord Rencliffe mounted Helen into her saddle, Mabel was unable to avoid Sir Robert's help. As he arranged her habit he bent low, and to her dismay and surprise pressed his lips unobserved to her gloved hand as she settled her skirts.

"I am only taking the oath," he said with a forced laugh; "and there is nothing more sacred to me to seal it on."

"I hope the oath is a worthy one then, Sir Robert, or it is painful treason thus."

"Yes, on my honour, worthy so far as it concerns *you*."

"That is not enough."

"To be true to *your* wish *must* be a worthy line for me."

"If *wishes* could make you truer to yourself and honour, I would spend mine freely for you," she answered, pitying from her tender heart's core the weakness of the spoiled nature.

As they turned their horses down a lane shadowed by spring leaves whispering on sturdy oaks and beeches, he said in a surprisingly cheerful voice,

"Shall you be present at the double event in July?"

"I suppose so."

"You have never courage to ask your father for another holiday so soon!"

"I think you do not understand the ground you are on, Sir Robert."

"Pardon, then! But do you know you have never congratulated me on my engagement?"

"I give you more of the good wishes before mentioned just now."

"You won't even congratulate me on my having the promise of a beautiful wife, and a merry houseful of admiring guests."

"Yes, if that satisfies you."

"It must, I suppose."

"I believe a man must *work* to be *happy*."

"Oh, I couldn't do that; never did it."

"Do you never feel *any* responsibility?"

"No. Every one needn't be responsible."

"I don't agree at all. Why, look at that tiny money-spinner," she added laughing as the insect hung from the brim of Sir Robert's hat,

"I dare say he has a family to think of and provide for!"

"A queer way of doing it! tumbling like 'an idiot off the tree to my starvation ground of a hat!"

"Let me restore him on my whip to his proper sphere then—oh, it is a *very* responsible world, Sir Robert. There see, the little creature is glad to be in his proper region again, and will soon be at work."

"I believe you look upon me in about the same pitying indulgent way! However I dare say your pattern spider has left his family in the shape of eggs in a very unsafe place, inhabited by enemies, and he will go on spinning that web in his senseless way for any bird's wing to break!"

"Never mind, he is happier in spinning it."

"To catch smaller insects to satisfy his appetite. Oh, I don't think much of your *responsible* world, Miss Clayton."

"You will not look at the right side of it."

"No—I only look at myself;—and *you* in the sky over my head, like that lark."

They turned a corner of the road and came suddenly on Mr. Erlton, talking to Helen and her lover. He started and looked inquiringly back to the corner, as if expecting to see others arrive. "Had Mrs. Macpherson's information been right?" he asked himself; and involuntarily asked Helen if her sister were at Fir Lodge also for a time. "No, she is wedded to season life," said Sir Robert carelessly, puzzling the Rector still more. He said a few words about Elva's return as he bowed to Mabel, he did not wait afterwards to hear Helen's inquiries after his ferns, indeed he did not seem to notice her eyes and voice addressing him.

"Up in the clouds!" laughed her lover, "but I like that parson, Helen—there seems nothing of sham about him. Yesterday I saw him look in at the cricket field for a while. You should have seen all the caps go off with hearty greetings and respect too."

"Yes, I think he is wonderfully charming in look and manner. I always feel a better sort of creature while he is near, or rather as if I ought to be!"

"Don't sigh after impossibilities, and don't make me hate him after all by speaking of him in that tone!"

"Very well, I won't, because I want him to help in the July ceremony;" and she involuntarily added, "Mabel is coming to it."

"Oh yes—by the way let us ask him now."

"No, no, dear, we will write."

"So we might lose a day, like Titus! No, I will overtake him; no risk of even that little disappointment in the smooth course of our love, my beautiful."

She chided him with blushing cheeks but happy eyes, as he rode laughing past Mabel and her companion.

"He has deserted you, so I shall not forsake you any more," said Mabel, keeping by Helen's side till they got home again.

Mr. Erlton waited when he saw he was pursued, and gladly accepted the proposal, but his face changed to a blank when Lord Rencliffe added, "It will be a double wedding, you know."

The Rector followed his glance as it turned towards Sir Robert in the distance, but his eye immediately rested on Mabel, and he answered, "I will, if I can, that is—but you could easily supply my place if—"

"Oh, you must manage it, Helen wishes it."

"I think you are rather premature," was Sir Robert's tart greeting to his friend on his return.

"Why, my dear fellow, you don't object?"

Sir Robert gave a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders, and spurred his horse, saying, "I must have a gallop across there—you will follow when you like, I suppose."

Mr. Erlton pursued his way quickly, he passed many poor friends on his way, but did not seem to see them for once.

"Something gone wrong with him, I'm sure," said old Ben Watts, waiting for him for advice about his son; "I'm sure that's a pity if *he* is in trouble."

But a less considerate applicant did not let him pass, a trembling old man with a whining voice laid hold of his arm.

"Mr. Erlton, sir, would you kindly do an *on*pleasant thing to oblige me?"

"What is it, Benwell?"

"Can't *you* just make Farmer Nearly pay me my money? You might bring it into a sermon, perhaps; *I* can't make him give me my rights!"

"Tell me what they are, first."

A long story of underpaid and unpaid work was whined forth into a now attentive ear, resulting in the reply,

"I will go and see him now, Benwell, I need a longer walk this morning, but I can't promise to get what you want."

"Shove it into a sermon then, sir, I can't think he'd stand *that*, as he likes to look respectable in church. I dursn't have him up to court about it, or t'other farmers might fight shy of giving me work."

"I think he'll do without anything so bad as *that*, my friend," said the Rector, laughing, "either sermon or summoning!"

"Well, *you* can bring him round if any one can, sir, and thank you kindly."

The Rector sped away through the fresh spring daisies across the fields to a farm three miles off, saying now and again, "Work on, work on, there's nothing else for it, and *He* knows the end of it all!"

A kindly visit to the farmer's family, a few politic words to him about poor old Benwell's advancing years and need of ready pay for honest work from morning till night, succeeded in making the farmer look very shamefaced, and ended in his confessing that he knew the Rector was at *him* this time, and that he would send the money at once. "I know they tell you all their troubles, sir, and I saw the twinkle in your eye as you played the line a little with me to give me a chance of escaping a charge."

"I'll take the money to Benwell, if you like, now," said the Rector with another twinkle, which he did not allow Mr. Nearly to see, however.

"Well, sir,—thank you, will you be troubled with *all* of it now?"

"Oh yes, no trouble at all, and I will give you a receipt for it."

Rather reluctantly the coins were laid in the Rector's hand, and joyfully received half an hour after by the workman.

"Bless you, sir! I *did* need it, and you are a—a—Reverend *trump*, you are!"

Mrs. Macpherson was nearly distraught with unsatisfied curiosity over Fir Lodge people and affairs. Mabel could not give her any special reasons for Amy's absence while Sir Robert was there. She declared she could *shake* Lady Pailey for taking things so quietly. Most of Mrs. M.'s friends would have been considerably if not constantly shaken if her power were absolute. Then her energies, superfluous, turned to Elva's account.

"She wants rousing, Mabel. Turn her out of bed every morning at six o'clock, and make her run over the common before breakfast. *I'm* the doctor for *her*!"

Involuntarily Mabel placed a protecting arm round the child by her side, the little arms clinging to her suddenly, the little face expressing something like terror, as if she thought the tender mercies of Mrs. Macpherson would be cruel indeed.

One day when Mabel was very busy with her father's quarterly account books, and Elva was not feeling well enough to accompany Burton on a violet-seeking expedition, Helen took her sketch-book and accompanied the lad to the top of Far View Hill, to amuse herself with sketching the village below while Burton gathered the wild flowers on the hill-side, saying she should have it framed as a peaceful memento.

Ah, Helen! the framing is of a mournful kind! Memory's darkest clouds surround that sketch for ever now!

Burton carried her materials in a huge basket, which was to bring back the whole hill-side, he told Elva, and he began to gather blossoms for her room specially, he said, while Helen worked away, with happy pictures of the future mingling with her colours on the board ; but they unconsciously stayed her hand, and she lay back on the soft mossy turf, looking up to the deep blue sky which seemed to be peopled with larks singing in ecstasy. She watched them lazily—tiny specks so high, so high ! then descending and increasing till like an arrow they fell into the green bed at her feet, the wild clear song dying suddenly after increasing in melody as they came nearer and nearer. Helen felt that the heaven above her and the earth beneath were indeed "exceeding beautiful," and she lay wrapped in peaceful love and content greater than words could tell.

She was near a hedge which bordered a bank above a road sunk into the hill top, and presently footsteps came down the other side of the barrier, and a woman's sharp tones rose into the clear air, saying,

"No, I've been wanting to run against you by chance, for Mary wouldn't let me go to the house to seek you, but she is longing to see you all the same before she goes. I brought her down here to get a change of air at her aunt's,—thinking it was a chance of saving her,—and now I find you are here, courting Squire Clayton's niece."

And then Helen's heart seemed to stop, for Lord Rencliffe answered,

"I tell you I *can't* see her ! You must both go away at once ; I will pay you well."

"*Pay us well !*" cried the woman with infinite scorn in her voice. "*Can* you pay a mother for her daughter's life ! If it were not for *her* persuasions and begging me not to kill her quicker, I would make *you* pay dearly enough ; and if you *don't* come and see her *now*, as *she* begs, I will make my story heard above all the 'wish ye joys' at *your* wedding ! My *Mary* should have been your wife, you know *that*,

nay, she *is* your wife in the sight of heaven, though the law says no. But *she* knew nothing of *law* when you stole her heart and *pretended* to marry her in that wicked London! I kept her *too* innocent about wicked places and wicked men like you!"

"Now *do* be reasonable, my good woman!"

"I'll hear none of *your* reasons! Will you come now before Mary dies, or shall I come to your wedding?"

"I'll come, I'll come,—don't make a row, to startle the village over there!"

"Oh, no—Lord Rencliffe—you folks don't like rows, do you, only quiet murder!"

"And to murder such a sweet flower as my Mary!" she added, sobbing, as they walked away down the road a little way,—then he stopped and said,

"I can't go now!"

"You *must*, or I'll tell that young lady,—there now!"

"Nonsense! It would make no difference."

"Wouldn't it though?"

"No—besides she—knows it."

"Then rich folks haven't as much pride as poor ones! I'll go and tell her so."

"No, no! Don't go to the village now, I'm going presently when she is likely to be home from their walk, and I'll see about Mary afterwards."

"I'll not trust you! You shall come now. She wants to tell you she forgives you, poor tender-souled lamb! she says she can't die happy without seeing you once more."

The footsteps moved on at last.

Poor Helen! poor, *poor* Helen! What had suddenly darkened the sun, and chilled the life out of her heart? "A dream, of course," in a sudden darkened sleep on the hill-side? But no! in a break of the roadside bank she saw, dimly, it is true, two figures passing, and one

she knew too well! Stunned and dazed she gathered up her drawings—she could not stay there listening to those maddening larks any longer, their song burnt into her brain, and a descending songster seemed to cry exultingly over her, "Deceived, deceived, deceived!"

Poor child! Just now feeling so rich. She gazed at the country spread smilingly at her feet,—was it sea, or sky, or desert?

"What was she to do? Oh, yes, go home, and—*hide*? Mabel would want her soon; ah, if she could only hide away, or do as Mary does!" But she must live: and live in dark loneliness.

"Going home?" cried Burton, from below; "very well, I'll meet you at the bottom."

But, fortunately, he was so impatient to exhibit his spoils to Elva that he went on as Helen slowly descended the path, and so she crept away to her room on shaking limbs, and there she sat motionless on the first seat that was reached, and stared blankly at her sketch fallen at her feet for a long time, she did not know how long, only that she felt very cold and ill,—but after a time she reached the sunny window-seat and laid her head on it as she knelt down on the floor and heard voices as in a dream in the house and in the garden too—"Voices, more voices, but had they anything more to kill her with?"

Mabel's voice ascended gaily from the hall as Burton's footsteps crossed it,—*"What have you done with Helen, Sir Knight? Not left her on the hill for tramps to steal, I hope?"*

"I shouldn't wonder," was the reply, as a bound down the doorsteps sounded in company with a merry laugh—and then his voice from the garden—"No, really and truly I left her at the hill foot, just coming into the village."

Then sounds of a merry chase in the garden rose to Helen's deadened senses, while Elva's silvery laugh rang out from a window below.

"Why are they laughing over me!" thought the sufferer, confusedly, mingling the echoes with the cruel song of larks.

"I must go, or father will have eaten all my dinner,—treacle-pudding too, awful loss!" cried Burton's departing voice, "she must be in her bedroom, Miss Clayton,—unless she stopped in the village to ask after Betty Brown's corns, or 'neuralgy!'"

Mabel pursued him to the gate, and looked up the village street in vain; then she turned, humming an air, and ascended to Helen's room; the latter had power and thought to stagger to her feet, and met her cousin's glance round the room with a deprecating appeal from stony eyes—"I'm only—waiting;—I'm coming."

Mabel took both her hands and laid them on her breast, as she gazed with very deep concern into her face for a moment, and then Helen fell down again with her head hidden in the window-seat under her two clasped hands, as if shielding it from blows.

"Don't speak to *me*," she cried, "don't ask me,—ask her if it is true!"

"Ask whom, my sweet cousin?"

"Why—Mary," she whispered,—“isn't it Mary?"

Mabel's cheek paled now with sudden fear of insanity; she moved quietly towards the bell, but Helen sprang up, crying,

"Don't, Mabel! give me time,—don't expose him—I mean me,—her—I mean—"

"You're feverish, dearest, let me send for our dear old doctor. You must have got a chill on the hill-side, or the sun, perhaps, on your head!"

"Yes, a chill—a chill—on the hill-side,—but I shall get better if you will wait—only wait."

"Very well, darling, but luncheon is ready, and you need some; I will ring and tell them to bring ours here, as papa is not at home to-day, and Elva can have hers with the maid she chooses to have,—she likes to have them in turns on such occasions," Mabel went on,

aiming at any distraction for Helen's thoughts, which she could see were wrestling in deadly combat with some dire wound to her spirit. She shielded her from easy view as the bell was answered, and gave orders as composedly as she could ; her shaking hand could scarcely pour out some wine when it came, but Helen drank it obediently at her request, and even ate a very few pieces of biscuit absently enough though, and then Mabel told her she must lie down on the bed, and try to sleep.

"Yes—did I sleep on the hill-side? say it was a dream, Mabel!"

"We will find out presently, dearie."

She lay as in a stupor of pain for an hour, while Mabel sat in the window-seat until Helen called her softly, saying, "Mabel, I must tell *you* my dream—only you."

After a gasped sigh she told it in a tone as if she were still only half awake or half alive, while Mabel knelt beside her and held her face on her shoulder watching the white lips frame the pitiful story. When it was over Mabel could only kiss her and tenderly hold the poor throbbing head closer. What else could she do? And Helen seemed to feel relieved by the recital, and lay more easily with a more life-like expression in her troubled eyes.

Presently Mr. Clayton was heard below, and after extorting a promise from Helen to remain still, Mabel ran down to tell him that Helen was not well.

"Have you sent for the doctor?"

"Not yet—she may be better soon."

"Well, we must take care of her," he replied anxiously, with a glance at Elva.

As she left the room she saw Lord Rencliffe coming up the drive ; she told a servant to prevent his ringing the bell and to say that Miss Rogers was not well enough to see him that day.

Of course he expressed concern, and said he would call early next day ; he went gloomily down the drive, flicking off the sweet blos-

soms of one or two flowers abstractedly with his whip as he passed down the bordered way.

In the quiet dusk time tears came to Helen's relief. She sobbed passionately for awhile, and at last asked Mabel if "*he*" had been.

"Yes, my darling ; and he is coming to-morrow."

"Surely this will kill me before to-morrow !"

Mabel whispered a few loving words of strength and comfort, and at last left her asleep.

Next morning she was shocked to see the change in her cousin's appearance, and when she had to tell her who was waiting below there was a struggle of agony to witness in the heavy eyes, tortured brow and drawn white lips.

"I will write my message, Mabel."

The shaking fingers scrawled these words—

"I was on the hill-side yesterday morning, and heard all Mary's mother said to you.—Yours *never* more, HELEN."

Mabel placed the note in an envelope, and sent it by a servant to the morning-room—telling her not to wait for an answer.

Then Helen sank down, trembling among her pillows, saying,

"Only to hide myself away for life !"

"But we cannot hide from GOD'S loving compassion, Helen ; and even poor Mary is, I feel sure, at peace under His wise hand, unquestioning His will."

"Ah, Mary, yes. Let me think of her,—it helps me so that I may learn even to show him how little I can regret losing a tarnished love like his ! I can't yet !"

"GOD is our strength, darling."

"Mabel, I have not looked to Him like you ; I took all my sunshine as a matter of course, almost thinking I deserved it !"

"He is teaching you to own the Hand that should lead us, and that has traced our way, dearest.—We must trust It where we cannot trace. There is no other peace."

"And I must try to forgive him!"

"Mary forgave much more."

"But her mother hates him,—so may I, in time!"

"Hate the sin, not the sinner; we can pray only for him, dearie."

They heard him leave the house quickly, and Mabel went down to Elva.

"What is the matter, auntie? Everybody seems strange; isn't Helen better?"

"Yes, dear. But she has a great sorrow to bear just now, one we cannot talk about, and Lord Rencliffe cannot come to see her any more, so don't mention him."

"Poor Helen—give her my love, and say I *am* sorry she is so sorry! I shall have to cry a little time, I think, auntie, I feel very sad-hearted to-day. Poor Helen!"

Mabel cried too, and Elva clung to her lovingly. "Don't you cry, auntie, let me do it for you."

"There now, I think we have cried enough to do us good, darling; what is the little text for to-day? the one in your book?"

"'JESUS wept.' But that was because somebody was dead,—wasn't it?"

"Not exactly, dear. We must pray that dear Helen may know and feel that He is able to help in trouble."

"I think sometimes that He is going to take me up beside Him, auntie."

"Oh, why, my sweetest?"

"I feel often *so* tired! and He seems to be very near me, especially at night, and says, 'Come to Me; you can't go on very far, you *are* such a weak little girl.' One night I saw the dear Baby JESUS beckon to me."

Mabel kissed the little head to hide fresh tears, then she sat down on a stool by the sofa and read a story, to Elva's delight,—it ended with these lines added,—

" So fades a summer cloud away,
So sinks the gale when storms are o'er,
So gently shuts the eye of day,
So dies a wave along the shore."

" And so will all our sorrows fade away on the shore of eternity with that last wave from this troubled life," murmured Mabel.

The next morning as Mabel was working beside Elva and Burton she was surprised by Lord Rencliffe appearing at the window, saying as he stepped in,

" I thought I must make sure of you at once, Miss Clayton,—pray forgive my intrusion."

He looked pale and very agitated ; Mabel rose without speaking, and he followed her into the hall, and led her in spite of her hesitation into the drawing-room.

" You will, you *must*, give me a few moments !"

She sat down, and looked out of the window as he paced up and down ; she could not say anything to him, but a shade of pity settled in her heart—the heart so tender towards any pain.

" Has she told you ? of course she has ?" he almost whispered, at length.

Mabel bowed her head sadly in assent, and then said,

" I think you have made a mistake in seeking an interview with me. Helen has not deputed me to speak for her ; it is not my province to discuss with you your sin and your cruelty. I have witnessed Helen's bitter sufferings and can naturally have nothing but dislike to your society,—and of course I could not possibly convey to you in words my opinion of your conduct, and I wonder that the exposure of it does not insure your absence, as some sort of reparation at present."

" I seized an opportunity of speaking to you as my only hope. Your influence is so great with every one, and priceless to me now as regards Helen. Don't speak so coldly, Miss Clayton,—it is not your way when you see such penitent misery as mine."

"When did the penitence appear?" said Mabel, scorn for once in her sweet voice.

"*Really* by Mary's deathbed, though it certainly looks as if only exposure had called it forth. But I ask you to help me as you would help a drowning man whom you might see dying without *your* help, and though he were a vile wretch you would save him I know."

"I would save Helen first, I think, Lord Rencliffe, because I love her dearly."

"I dare say you think she would be lost on me now, but I ask for time and trust, to win back her love worthily."

"Trust!" echoed Mabel, with deep agony in her tone. "Helen did not stint hers, and the greatness of it makes the destruction a vaster wreck."

"Will you persuade her to see me?"

"No. I will ask her if she can."

She went to Helen's side and found her pale as death and expectant. "I heard his voice, Mabel, have you sent him away for ever? I supposed you would judge rightly in doing it, but oh! Mabel, my dead, dead life henceforth!"

"He wishes to see you, darling, and I did not feel justified in refusing to tell you so."

"Does he dare to look into my face? I thought at least he would feel shame *now*! How *could* I see him? do you think I should, Mabel?"

"I don't know, dearest. If you had a father or brother to do it all for you I should say no, not yet. I don't think you can while you tremble so. I told him I would ask you if you were able."

"He shall not think of me as crushed, I will see him, to settle our separation once for all."

He was standing with eager eyes on the door when Helen entered, but she did not look at him, she dropped into a chair and sat still, breathing painfully, while he fell on his knees and caught her dress to his lips; she drew it away.

"Helen, can you promise to forget what you heard on that accursed hill? I will make it up to you, Helen, I will indeed!"

"And Mary Keeling?" she said in a dry lifeless tone, "how have you made it up to her, or how will you? That is the only thing that I am interested in now, Lord Rencliffe."

"Helen, don't use that business-like tone! Can your love die so soon?"

"Oh, yes, a sudden but sure death."

"Will you not hear what excuses I can put into words for your ear?"

"*Certainly not.* When you have killed two people, excuses are useless to bring any life back to them; my love is dead, is Mary Keeling's alive still?"

"Yes, I believe so."

"Then, if you wish to atone and to lessen my disgust for your memory you will make her your legal wife before she dies. This is one of the only reasons I see you now, to suggest this."

"And the other reasons?"

"One more. To convince you definitely that our parting for ever now ensues."

His efforts at calmness failed, he besought her wildly, endearingly, to forgive and forget.

"I shall try to forget *everything*, certainly; I cannot forgive till you make reparation in the way I mention. I cannot trust myself to reproach you on my own account for destroying such love and faith as I gave you." Her voice broke at the words, and he essayed to clasp her in his arms; she sprang to a distance, saying, "If you, as Mary Keeling's husband, which you are in the sight of heaven, touch me so, I will ring the bell for help. I will not stay longer, except to say farewell, and may GOD forgive you and move you to do *her* justice."

She tottered towards the door having never looked into his face.

"Helen, will you throw my deep love away indeed? you will relent in time."

"It ought never to have been mine."

"But it *is* yours, till death."

"Mine was all yours till yesterday. I could kneel at Mary's feet in shame for you. I feel nothing else now, everything else is as I told you, dead. You can yet live to be a man for the future, but never for me to love and trust again. Good-bye!"

She left him there, and Mabel found her in stupor and prostration when she went to her silent room.

CHAPTER XV.

"**A**MY!" cried Mrs. Rogers in dire and most unaffected dismay. "What is the matter, mother? Do not make one's nerves play the family coach game this way; mine will never repose again. Is your new dress lost on the way? or has the General gone to sleep with his forepapas?"

"Don't trifle now, Amy, look at this letter."

"Oh, from Helen. Has Mabel turned her into a nun?"

"Yes; or at least it is as bad. Her engagement is broken off."

"Never! so that is Mabel's doing."

"She gives no particulars. What is to be done?"

"It is only a quarrel, perhaps."

"Helen doesn't quarrel; it must be serious."

"I dare say some goody-goody influence on Mabel's part. Helen is infatuated."

"If I thought so, I would write to Philip."

"I should think *he* would rather mar than mend a lover's quarrel. But if Mabel has made Helen believe she is marrying a sinner, Helen will give him up to please her."

"Nonsense, Amy! where is your perception of character? If Helen loved a sinner she would cleave to him through thick and thin."

"That depends on his sin, I think; it must be an honest kind of a failing. He might have the temper of a Tartar, and beat her when it rose to boiling point, but he mustn't tell *her* a *lie*, or be mean.—Well, I'm glad she is going to stay down there till she feels better; but *I* wouldn't break my heart in a corner for any man. A secret sorrow is not in my way."

"She will make herself look dreadfully old if she frets over it," sighed Mrs. Rogers; "I owe my youthful appearance to the fact of taking things quietly. How tiresome though, when every one thought her so fortunate!"

"Yes; you see, mother, my loose reins keep *my* steed in better hold, after all."

"It is not *his* wish to be free, I am sure."

"You mean Rencliffe's—no—I suppose not."

"I am really vexed, and must write to the silly girl at once, and urge her to make it up."

"In *any* case?" asked Amy satirically.

"Oh, there won't be any *case* in it—some high-flown nonsense on Helen's part!"

Mrs. Rogers found that Helen was firm in her resolution, and would only say that her marriage with Lord Rencliffe had been rendered impossible, begging her not to insist on further explanations as yet, as nothing could alter her determination; she would remain at Fir Lodge some time. Mrs. Rogers saw Lord Rencliffe in town from time to time. He always avoided her though, and in answer to a note asking him for an interview, replied that "it could only be painful on both sides, and he would always be ready to appear there again when Miss Helen Rogers would restore him to his former privileged position respecting herself." He knew quite

well that Mrs. Rogers would be an incapable ally. Meanwhile poor Helen was struggling with her shocked feelings and blighted life, as it seemed yet, crying in her heart's loneliness, "I cannot bear it, I cannot bear the sudden darkness!"

Mabel grieved to see the weary desolation written in the pale set face, and could only pray for courage to come to the poor riven heart; and even Mr. Clayton read the suffering endured silently like his own, and was gentle and kind to his niece. With little Elva he grew quite affectionate, and he would look at her wasting form with keen regret, thinking of that fatal walk to B——.

One day he offered to take her for a drive in an easy pony-carriage which Elva loved to use for rolling leisurely along the lanes, where Burton would collect ferns and flowers, and tell her the names of the different birds singing in the hedgerows. The day in question was bright and balmy. Helen, Elva, and Mr. Clayton started quite merrily to all appearance, the child's happiness at the honour done her warming the chilled spirits of her companions.

In a narrow lane they met the Rector, the surprise he felt was scarcely concealed.

"Oh, how I *wish*!—" cried Elva.

"*What* do you wish?" asked Mr. Clayton.

"Never mind," said Elva, blushing, and sadly shaking her little head, "I forgot—I thought I *should* so like to speak to him, it is such a long while since."

To every one's surprise the chaise stopped, and Mr. Erlton stopped too. Helen bade him good morning, and smiled encouragement to Elva, who stretched out her small hands in welcome, while Mr. Clayton muttered a kind of salute, but took no further notice of him.

Elva asked about her flowers and interests at the rectory, and ended by saying,

"I am so sorry you can't come and see me ever any more! Be-

cause I think I am not going to stay away from dear old Grandpa very much longer."

Mr. Clayton gathered up the reins with a jerk, and said,

"You must have any friends you like to see *you*, Elva."

"Will you come?" cried Elva gladly, as she bent her little head eagerly forward, while her pale cheeks brightened with a coral-tinted glow, "*will* you, Mr. Erlton?"

"Surely, my sweet."

"To-morrow?"

"Yes, and any to-morrow you like afterwards."

They moved on, Mr. Clayton not noticing the bow which the Rector directed to him, also.

So nearly every day there was a congenial meeting at Elva's court in a cheerful corner of the drawing-room window leading into the part of the garden she loved best, a smooth lawn shadowed over by fine old whispering trees. Helen brought her work, or sketching, and Burton frequently joined the group. Mabel sat at her own little writing-table near the door, so that she could slip out undisturbedly if she heard her father in need of help, or any of the frequent applicants for her help or sympathy arriving; but there were two at least of those she left who always missed her presence, and welcomed its return in their secret hearts. Elva's pure little face expressed great content when all those she loved were listening with her to a musical voice reading or teaching all kinds of new and interesting subjects, and shedding new light on points of the old, old Story of our Faith.

One day he had been saying a few simple reverent words on the love of our FATHER, and, on ceasing, bent to give Elva his farewell kiss. She said dreamily,

"*That's* what the tombstone said, isn't it, auntie?"

"Which tombstone are you thinking of?" inquired the Rector, smiling, for Mabel did not answer.

"Why, the tombstone in London; I noticed the name on it and

showed it to auntie ; it was Helen Clayton's, and auntie cried, so I was sorry I showed it to her, because—"

She stopped and looked at Mabel, who bent her head lower, but kept silence.

"You know," Elva whispered, taking it as permission to proceed, "auntie had a dear little brother once,—I mustn't grieve *Mr.* Clayton by talking of him though,—and he died—no, I don't *think* she *said* he died, though—but this was his name too on the tombstone—another Archie, I suppose,—his wife, it said, you know."

"The '*little* Archie' may have had a wife too, if he grew up," she mused on, "then she would have been auntie's dear sister."

He was shaking hands with Mabel now, as he said good-bye, he added in a low tone,

"She was my dear sister too."

"I know it, now," Mabel replied as he held her hand a minute, making her soft cheek flush delicate rosy pink, and her eyes brighten in the midst of their grief.

He noticed it with gladness for a moment, then a hopeless expression passed over the noble face as he turned away. But returning to her side he said hurriedly, "We tried in vain to find her, and give her my father's pardon. Her name was the last on his lips."

Mabel tried to speak, but what could she say without discussing and blaming her father ?

"You would have loved her well," he added, "I am sure she would have dearly loved you. Can you not influence your father to put his resentment aside ? It is undeserved indeed ! We all were ignorant of the unhappy scheme, and tried our best to find Helen and induce her to confide in us afterwards, when some arrangement might have been made to—"

"I understand," said Mabel.

"And you could not, cannot help ?"

"No—I may not discuss it with him."

"And you cannot ask him to forgive Archie?"

"Oh, I have, I have!"

"He will not forgive *me* then, certainly! though I have done him no wrong."

They had forgotten the presence of the child, Helen and Burton had left earlier,—but now that their raised and earnest voices had let some painful light into Elva's mind, she begged to know why Mr. Clayton was angry with her friend, saying, "*Let* me ask him to be friends—*please* do! He is so kind to me, and he *did* stop the pony chaise to please me!"

"A little child shall lead them," the Rector said, smiling, and Mabel's face reflected the smile, with hope added.

"I would catch at any straw to build such hopes with, Miss Clayton," he said eagerly,—“perhaps she may have an opportunity of saying a word for us?”

He emphasized the word “us” as his eyes glowed thrilling tenderness into hers; she turned to Elva's side and kissed her very lovingly as she whispered,

"When you have a quiet time and chance, darling, you may *try*; I will tell you as well as I *can* why papa is vexed."

Mr. Erlton almost whispered good-bye in the voice of a blessing over the two heads pressed lovingly together, and then he left Mabel to adapt Archie's story to Elva's eager attention. Mabel thought as she looked at the frail little “straw” to help them how much happiness depended on her success,—and “if Elva fails!” ah! what a cloud on *that*!

That very evening when spring twilight was deepening into grey night, and Mabel was singing a sweet old melody to amuse Elva, Mr. Clayton entered the room, the familiar strains seeming to bring even his childhood's days about him once more, and a shade of romance even to his life-tried heart. He sat down by Elva's couch and she placed her tiny palm on his hand resting on his knee. He placed the

other over the back of her pillow and gave himself up to loving influences. The old song was followed by a hymn, Mabel sitting in the window-seat in shadowed grace, the light only falling in broken power through the old worn branches of a tree overhanging that corner, a picture of her own shadowed life; and now one little broken ray of light was leaving her as Elva slowly drooped away out of the scene of her quiet history.

"I shall soon be listening to the pretty golden angels' songs," said Elva quietly.

There was no answer except his arm coming closer to her shoulders.

"I don't think they *can* sing more nicely than you do, my own dear Auntie May!"

Mr. Clayton started up and then looked down wistfully into the pure little face glancing as a snowdrop under her falling mass of golden hair.

"It is quite true, Mr. Clayton. I think that the angels must have told me some night in my sleep, and now I *often* remember it, that I am going away so far, ever so far, to rest after being tired so long."

"Elva, you must not have these gloomy ideas!"

"Gloomy?" she repeated. "It isn't gloomy when JESUS makes it bright. He is coming for me."

No sound except a smothered sob from the seat under the shadow. Elva continued,—

"I don't like to think of lying under the cold dark ground, it seems *so* lonely, but when I think of all that Mr. Erlton and auntie have told me about the home for little tired children like me, where GOD'S glory shines, and JESUS lives, I feel quite glad to go."

"Yes," whispered the lonely-spirited man, "*you* have nothing to grieve for, or regret."

He had spoken as if in reverie, but the child suddenly remembered her mission and clung to his arm, turning her shining eyes like two stars of hope up to his face.

"Yes, Mr. Clayton—there *is* one thing! one thing I grieve for very much. I am only a little girl and don't understand about it *all*, but I want, oh I want you and Auntie Mabel and Mr. Erlton to be all *good* friends when I am gone,—and to see auntie *happy*."

"Is your 'auntie' unhappy?"

"Yes, about one thing that makes *you* sad; please, *please*, listen to me about it, *dear* Mr. Clayton! because I am going away soon you know, and can't *ever* ask you anything more!"

"Say on, child," he said gently.

"You are all sad because Archie is lost—"

"Yes, but Elva, really you cannot know—"

"I only know what auntie told me after we saw the tombstone, and a little more last night after I heard something which made me understand that Archie was not forgiven."

He turned towards Mabel, but Elva's little fingers clung to him passionately as she continued, "Helen's father and brothers were *very very* grieved too, they didn't want her to run away with Archie, but they tried to find her and couldn't, and her poor old father died so sorry, *so* sorry."

Mr. Clayton sat quite still and silent, and the small voice went on,

"And Archie came back here the night before dear Grandpa died, and he came to see you, but was afraid to come in because you hadn't tried to find him, and that made Grandpa and auntie very sorry again."

Mabel's head was hidden on her knees now to stifle her sobs; her father came to her,—

"Is this so?"

"Yes,—I wanted to tell you before, but you would not allow me," she said gently and simply, as if finishing Elva's story for her.

The child called his name pleadingly; he returned to her side.

"For my sake, as a good-bye present to me, you know; won't you forgive poor Archie? he is *lost*, and *alone*, you see! and be kind to

Mr. Erlton ? because he is my kind friend, and you are good to me always now—and then when I do go away I shall feel so much, much happier."

He did not answer.

"Perhaps GOD will let me look down through the sky, and if I don't see you all happy and Archie with you I—I—shall *have* to be unhappy, I think, even in Heaven !"

The little voice grew weaker,—he noticed it, and then thought it would soon be silent here, but perhaps strong and clear among those golden angels she had spoken of.

She took his hand again in hers and laid it lovingly against her cheek.

"Dear Mr. Clayton, do you *love* little Elva ?"

He sobbed almost as he said,

"Wait a moment, child !"

Elva lay still with yearning eyes upon him as he paced up and down the room partly lighted now by pale moonlight. It fell on Mabel's bowed head, on little Elva's glistening face, and on the carpet where Philip Clayton strode with quick sharp steps ; a nightingale came on to the brown beech-tree on the lawn and began its thrilling melody.

After some minutes a hand was laid on Elva's curls,—she seized it with kisses, saying, "You are forgiving Archie now ?"

"Yes. GOD bless you, darling child !"

The flood-gates were opened by a tiny hand, and as the waters of pride rushed out there was infinite relief and peace in the hitherto closed up heart, and the old man's tears fell as freely as little Elva's in her joy.

Mabel came to his side, and knelt there with his arm round her shoulders, in silence for a while, then he rose, and gently kissing Elva and Mabel, left them together.

"GOD is *very* kind to me, Auntie May !"

When Elva was in bed Mabel sought Helen, and told her all the history of sorrow and joy. She was in a large window-seat at the end of a corridor, watching the shadows of many small clouds flit over the hill-side under the young moon in her quiet beauty. Helen always loved a window-seat best, and was often called "a window plant" by Amy.

"I wish that *I* could sail through and over my clouds like that cold moon,—or at least like she appears to do!" said Helen shivering.

"The clouds can only hide *earth* from her, darling, at times, too—like your clouds."

This was only murmured lovingly with an arm thrown so tenderly round her.

"Can you not yet feel thankful, dear, for the escape you had from revelation too late?"

"Yes, I think I do acknowledge that mercy!"

"Then the 'little light' will spread, dearie, and the clouds will only make Heaven look brighter when one looks through them."

When Mr. Erlton reached the hall door at Fir Lodge the next day he was very much surprised to see signs of Elva's work so soon in the appearance of Mr. Clayton at his study door inviting him to enter it.

Half an hour later he came to Elva's couch with such deep joy shining in his eyes and wondrous smile that Elva thought it was a beautiful face to look at, and like an angel messenger's. He knelt down by her side and bowed his head on her little palm. She whispered to him,

"If you are saying your prayers, will you think of your little Elva, too?"

When after a few moments he raised his head he said,

"Thank you, thank you, little one."

"I am glad I could do one little thing to make you all happier

before I go,—just one *little* thing when every one has been *so* good to me !”

“One *little* thing.” She did not know how mighty was the load a little child had lifted from three hearts at least !

He went to Mabel's side, and pressed her hand to his lips a moment, but very simply and reverently with thankful light in his eyes.

“She has restored a brother and a father to me,” said Mabel brightly, “at least I feel that Archie is on the way to us *now* !”

“I wish she could restore my sister to me, but I must not repine,—especially as I too shall venture to *hope* now.”

“It is too delightful to think that papa will help us now to find Archie ! It seemed useless to try before he was ready to join in the welcome home.”

So peace and hope gathered round little Elva's last days on earth. Helen was wonderfully stirred to interest and exertion in the matter of finding Archie, and her pen was often busy making inquiries in home and foreign lands. But all in vain !

CHAPTER XVI.

THE weeks passed on and still Elva was clinging to life, like a frail ivy spray on to a rough wall. July approached and Helen was to go alone to the wedding in London.

“Mamma tells me she is going to marry again, in September,” said Helen, very sadly one day, as Mabel and she were working. “I am sorry, I can't help it, that General Faversham is the future step-father. Mother says it is a pity I am not settled, as she calls it, in case I do not value a step-father's care. I think *I am settled*, in sorrowful wise though !”

“You can come back to us !” cried her cousin joyfully. “Aunt won't *need* you now !”

"That is a new light certainly," said Helen, "a cheering ray on the distance."

So after the wedding Helen returned to the country, her place being filled by the General's daughter, who Mrs. Rogers said did "quite as well as Helen with her broken spirit."

One day while Helen was in charge of Elva, Mabel went out to visit Mrs. White, who was ill and lonely, confessing to her visitor that she felt "miserable and discontented like," and adding, "I feel cross too, miss,—but I own it; for 'honesty's the best *apology*,' I say!"

Mabel's smiles and kind words, also a very cheery little pamphlet read aloud, dissipated the gloom very soon, and she returned home leisurely through the lanes, seeking some hedge blossoms for Elva. She was reaching up for a piece of late honeysuckle and smiling over Mrs. White's transposition of the proverb when a step approached unheard on the grass-bordered road, and an arm was stretched over her head to reach the spray she wanted. It was soon in her hand, while a rich voice, slightly agitated, greeted her. "Good morning. Is there any news?"

"None. Advertisements and all are useless!"

"Still let us hope and trust."

They turned down the lane together, and Mabel's heart was beating in spite of her efforts for self-control, for never had they two been alone before, and she knew—ah, full well now, that to be with him was the fulness of her earthly happiness.

"We have been waiting a weary time for news!" he continued presently,—and then he stopped under a spreading beech-tree and looked in her sweet flushed face as he took her hand in his gently, saying hurriedly and eagerly now—

"Miss Clayton! I have been waiting wearily for ever so faint a hope of something else. I love you, I love you!—will you be my wife?"

He looked under the drooping brim of her hat and only saw happy, but tearful, eyes so shyly escaping his gaze for a moment or two, then as he waited silently for the words he had so yearned to hear, she raised her head to his view, murmuring—"All my unworthy heart is yours,—but I am almost afraid to say I will be your wife, Mr. Erlton!"

"Then let me say it for you," he said with a glad ring in his voice, "and you, you shall explain to me later the incomprehensible fear!"

This was said in anything but a connected manner, except in the way of lovers' ways of linking words together, and Mabel knew that at last kind protecting sympathy was hers, a new ray of sunlight in the place of the many clouds that had overhung her way until lately; and in deep happiness they bent their steps homewards.

When they reached the house he said, "I will see Mr. Clayton at once in that terrible study!"

"And I will wait for you beside Elva," she answered, as he went off in haste to get over another ordeal. He feared lest Mabel should be refused to him as too great a sacrifice to a newly awakened spirit of reparation! She waited by Elva's side until her beating heart grew sick with suspense, then Mr. Clayton's voice called her from his study door. She stopped to kiss Elva before she obeyed.

"Is anything the matter, Auntie May?"

"No, darling."

"Why does your hand shake so then?"

"Never mind now, dearie, let me go."

"You look glad and yet you are crying!" persisted the child, clinging to her.

Mr. Clayton met her and placed her hand in that of the Rector, saying,

"I have made no parade of my love for you, Mabel! but I give

Mr. Erlton a valuable wife, if one can estimate it at a daughter's worth."

A few minutes later the two lovers came to Elva's side, the Rector taking her wee face into his hands, said, "Little fay, I think we have to thank your wand for something else now!"

"What do you mean? tell me quick, for it is something nice I know by your face."

"You see you gained so much for us that I had courage to ask for more! Mr. Clayton is going to let Miss—I mean Auntie May—marry me."

"Oh! I am *very, very, very* glad! But—but—not *yet*—please not just yet, if you are to take her over the sea like all the wedding people do for a long time!"

They knew what she meant, and in tearful tenderness Mabel stroked her cheek as she whispered, "I shall never leave *you*, sweet."

"I must make my rooms grander first of course, Elva, before a fine lady can come."

Mabel turned a look of dismay and mute appeal to him, but Elva said—

"She ought to have pretty rooms, the very prettiest you can make for her, but I don't want to see her in grand rooms, like London ones, if I look down and see you all."

"Some London rooms are very pretty," he answered, but Elva persisted—

"Yes, but Auntie May should have nice fresh sweet country rooms, *I* think."

The child drew Mabel's hand to her lips as she added, "But I suspect she will be happy with you *any* where."

"Thank you, pet—a compliment by deputy is better than none at all."

"But, Mr. Erlton!" began Mabel—

"When is the proper time for 'Mr. Erlton' to retire into 'Ran-

dolph?" he said gravely, but with such a glance from his deepening eyes that Mabel laughed with Elva over the novel idea, Elva explaining,

"You see you are always Mr. Erlton here,—it is so funny to think of you with another name. I suppose Auntie May will have to call you Randolph though, if you are her husband?"

"Certainly she will have to call me something nicer than 'Mr. Erlton.'"

"But you will not alter the rectory for me!" said Mabel, entreating him earnestly; "why should you trouble about that?"

"I should not do that in this case, but I think we must gild the cage a little for auntie, eh, Elva?"

"And ask Burton to come and see her for *me*," said Elva softly.

"What is the wee sprite saying?" asked Helen, now entering.

"We are talking of auntie's new home,—Mr. Erlton wants auntie."

Helen looked her inquiries while Mabel busied herself with Elva's pillows.

"To live at the rectory with him; isn't it a nice plan?" continued the child.

Mabel was soon half smothered in Helen's embrace, and then the Rector's hand was seized in warm congratulation.

"You *are* under a lucky star! Did our wee fairy help you to such a prize?"

She hid her face in Elva's curls to hide the workings of her face as the shadow of her own grief came down upon her thoughts.

The child kissed her lips, saying,

"We shall all be happy,—you, too, Helen, very soon."

"Elva is a sure prophetess of good," said Mabel.

Helen rose to her feet, battling with her tears as she exclaimed smilingly,

"Now I must stay here, to keep uncle company."

"And please will you all sometimes put a flower on your little Elva's

grave?" was the child's next remark; "then I shan't feel so—so lonely, you know, and I shall look at you, Helen, to see if you are happy, or not, when *you* come; and I shall want so much to see you look very happy."

Mr. Erlton dined with them that evening, and afterwards they all met in the room where Elva was waiting for her usual evensong, and to-night there was a rich soft tenor added to the concert. A silence followed the singing, then Elva said,

"Mr. Clayton, you won't be very sorry and lonely when we are gone away, I hope!"

"'When *we*?' " he repeated; "who are '*we*?' "

Helen drew near to his side, saying,

"Uncle Philip, may I stay with you when Mabel leaves you?"

"Or won't you come to us, Mr. Clayton?" said the Rector; "the old rectory is large enough."

Mabel thanked him by a look, but before she could say anything her father interposed,

"Helen, you would not like to live here?"

"Better than anything, uncle dear.—Don't *shovel* me out!"

He looked very pleased as he said,

"It would be a very pleasant arrangement."

"You will all be near together!" cried Elva quite joyously in her weak voice, "and I—oh, I shall not be so sorry to leave you all now."

Mr. Clayton felt so relieved at the smooth prospect that he ventured on a joke, asking slyly,

"What will Mrs. Macpherson say?"

Helen laughed gaily too, saying,

"We must ask her consent to it, of course."

"And Miss Conway?" added Mabel mischievously.

The Rector looked at her searchingly for a moment, trying to keep his gravity, but in vain; Mrs. Macpherson's scheme had been too

patent to be kept secret,—a general laugh undermined his efforts at unconsciousness as to her meaning, so he answered it,—

"Poor Miss Conway has escaped, you see ; and in point of fact, never showed any desire to be a captive ; but at one time Mrs. Macpherson threatened to be almost influential enough to persuade her to the contrary."

As if in terror at his own danger, he drew nearer to Mabel's side, with a sigh of relief.

"Yes, I always picture Mrs. Mac's wedding like the drawing years ago in 'Punch,'" said Helen,—“a tall woman carrying a little struggling man under her arm up a hill with a church at the top of it."

"Has any one heard from Amy lately ?" inquired Mr. Clayton.

"Yes, they are in Switzerland," said Helen ; and then she added, with a hidden effort, "Lord Rencliffe is with them now."

Her face was turned from the light. The words gave a great relief to her hearers, for if she could name him thus surely Elva's words were partly fulfilled !

"Well, then, we are all happy now, except for one undeserved boon!" said her uncle, partly to himself, as he stroked Elva's curls and kissed her for good-night,—but she whispered,

"Oh, but you *will* find Archie, I do believe you will—*some* day!"

The pleasant gatherings in the morning-room were ended,—little Elva never came down stairs after August roses were over ; she could sit in the sunshine of her own little favourite corner in her bedroom, surrounded by evidences of love and care, and there she could still hold her court, but only for a short time of reading now, it tired her so. Burton would bring offerings and anecdotes of daily interests, and the Rector would come for a few quiet words, but her strength failed day by day, and she could bear less and less, though she always had a bright smile and warm caress ready in return for country spoils from Burton and hothouse produce from the Rector, and Burton

would deck her picture-frames and window corner with golden, green, and scarlet treasures from the autumn woods. So, tenderly loved and cherished, little Elva was drifting away from their sight.

The good doctor had no questions to answer now, he came often to see his little dove, as he called her, making her halting-place as easy as he could, before she spread her wings.

Sir Robert and his bride were at the Park, Amy impatient to escape, but he remained firm to his resolve to spend a fortnight with his mother, who bore her disappointment in Amy as well as her mother's love enabled her to be patient for his sake.

"What a humdrum couple they will be at that rectory!" exclaimed Amy one day.

Sir Robert sat silently watching the fire.

"You look as if you disapproved of the picture!" laughed Amy; "it is well that I am too lazy to be jealous."

Still he made no answer, but she saw a sparkle in his eye which warned her to be more cautious, so she said lightly,

"Do decide to take that hunting-box in Leicestershire, and let us gallop after something through the winter. I shall soon frizzle up like a dead leaf here."

They had been in London for a week, and Helen was thinking of following them in time for her mother's marriage, but lingered to see as much as possible of Elva's last days. At evensong time the tide was ebbing fast one golden autumn evening. She had been very still all day, and a change occurred in the little worn face which made Mabel send in haste for Dr. Fentold, as he desired to be present with them when Elva should say "Good-bye." They all gathered round the little bed, Burton's broad shoulders shaking under his grief as he buried his face in the foot of the bed; Mr. Clayton stood by him. One little hand of Elva's was clasped in Mabel's, the other held the Rector's, the little face was turned to the glowing sunset.

"The song, the evensong!" she whispered.

Steadying her voice by a great effort of will, Mabel's rich soft tones floated over the dying bed, Burton's sobs making it very difficult.

"You know the holy, loving arms are open, ready to receive you, darling child?"

Mr. Erlton had whispered this to the little one who now turned a smile of sweet assent to his face, as she answered,—

"None of you must be sorry now. Poor Burton! kind merry Burton! thank you everybody, so much, for being so good to me. I want Mr. Clayton nearer."

He came softly and kissed her tearfully.

"Perhaps GOD will let *me* find Archie and bring him to you."

He bowed his head on the small white fingers that clasped his, and murmured, "GOD bless and reward you, little peacemaker."

"Burton, won't you come and say good-bye?"

But the boy did not move, his sobs came now beyond control.

"Oh, Burton, you make me feel sorry now! I didn't think you would cry so much for me; I couldn't play half well with you, and am such a weak little girl for a boy like you to care for. Try to come to heaven, Burton, and we will be well and happy there."

She stroked his curls as he came now to her side, speechless with his grief, and for a time the two children were still and silent with the sunset glow on their young faces, then Elva raised her eyes to Mr. Erlton.

"Raise me up to see the garden again." He did so. "Take care of mine for me, Burton; good-bye, kiss me now, dear, dear Burton, I love you so very much."

The boy turned to his father with piteous looks of entreaty after kissing his little playfellow passionately two or three times. "Father, *must* she die? *can't* you save her?"

The doctor led him tenderly out of the room; on his own return to the bedside Mabel and Mr. Erlton were bending over the little form

in order to catch the last accents, the small face full of love as her eyes were fixed on Mabel's.

"All bright up there," she gasped, looking upwards for a moment, "my gentle JESUS is waiting for me there, can't you see Him? Come too, dear, dear Auntie May, good—"

Little Elva was gone to the silent land before she could finish her farewell; she left the blessing of peace as her legacy, the fruit of her short sunny life of love.

They left Mabel with her still form, for she would let no other hand do the last offices for Elva.

CHAPTER XVII.

SEVEN years had passed since little Elva had been laid in her simple grave, followed to her resting place by all the village children carrying flowers to lay on its surface. Mabel Erlton is in an Eastern land now, helping her missionary husband, but her health has lately failed and she is to go home with him for rest. She is sitting in the verandah of their pretty flower-decked bungalow, her sweet face thinner and much paler than of yore, but with a glow of happiness and peaceful rest in her sweet eyes. She had laid down her needle-work and was resting her eyes on the distant sea line gleaming between the palm trees in the near foreground, and she was thinking of her old home beyond, which she was soon to see again.

A tiny figure was playing near her, a diminutive picture of herself, to whom she said presently,

"Elva, darling, do you see the water shining far away? you are going on it in a big ship, to see Grandpapa and Auntie Helen."

"Mamma go too? papa too?"

"Yes, my pet."

"Me go now then, me *quite* ready."

M M

"*Me not* quite ready," said her father's voice in the doorway, and very soon the small figure was tossed up to the fern baskets hanging from the roof, and brought down again to a strong shoulder perch.

Elva's voice sank to a whisper of wonder as she asked,

"Shall we leave baby brother here?"

"Dear baby brother is not *here*, my sweet, he is with little sister Elva in Heaven."

"It is quite time we took you and dear mother home, I think ; disgracefully white faces to look at!" he continued, kissing roses into his little daughter's, and looking anxiously into his wife's.

"Have you secured passages, dear? I saw the postman give in some letters to your working tent,—isn't it too hot now for a tent? the sun is more powerful daily."

"Yes, I thought so this morning ; I will come in doors to-morrow, but I love a tent to work in,—I feel more missionary! We have got passages for next month, sailing on the tenth."

"I think somebody else needs a rest, you have been working harder lately, Randolph, visiting patients in the sun too much, now you have taken up the *medico* rôle as well."

He smiled and shook his head, but she laid her hand on his brow, saying, "You *are* feeling exhausted, I am sure."

"Well—I am glad I have got everything in order for my substitute though, he can get on so much better now. I feel inclined to apply for a new place when we return, one with more work and fewer workers ; this region has grown rich in hands lately."

A coloured man here came to the group and, salaming low, informed them that a sick traveller was lying in the Dāk Bungalow, dying it was thought, "he no black man," added the servant.

"I will come and see him, at once."

Mabel rose too. "Let me come too. I had a strange dream last night,—Elva was there pointing from a golden cloud to *Archie*."

"Always *hoping*?" he said gently.

"*Always*," she answered earnestly.

In the traveller's bungalow they found a man lying on a bedstead in a darkened corner, his face hidden by his arm, his dark hair all tossed and disordered in its undue length ; as they entered, he stretched out his hand and gasped, "Water!" a small native lad gave it to him silently, and Mabel saw in the poor travel-stained face a resemblance only to the Archie of her youth. She discreetly kept out of his sight now, while Mr. Erlton questioned the lad, who said he knew a very little of the stranger's history,—he had been engaged as servant when the other servant had died of fever a month ago in the city further south, and his master had said he was travelling to the sea, and was kind. That was all he could tell them.

After some restoratives, the patient grew more interested in his surroundings, and fixed his eyes interrogatively on Mr. Erlton.

"We are friends,—hoping to do you good."

Mabel had whispered in her husband's ear, she withdrew to the doorway, trembling with her loving yearning and excitement—for she had found her brother,—was it to lose him yet!

The sick man gasped out,

"You can bury me decently,—there is nothing else any one can do!"

"We will try our best, if you will help us, to restore your strength ; cheer up, or we work under difficulties!"

The cheerful tones of good will brightened the wan face, and some food was taken.

They left him sleeping quietly, telling the boy to take good care of his master.

Mabel busied herself joyfully preparing a room in their own bungalow for her lost brother to be moved to next day. Early in the morning they repaired to his side, and he seemed so much stronger, that Mabel answered her husband's sign by coming to the bedside.

"*Who is that?*" he asked; "tell me quickly—is it another dream of—"

"It is my wife; can you bear good news if I tell you something more about her?"

"Tell me, *is* it my own—dear—sister?"

"Yes, Archie—my brother, my brother!" She knelt by his side to thank GOD.

"Oh, it is long indeed since I had any joy passing by my lot! Mabel, my sister! Can it be another fever dream?"

"No, no—it is real truth, Archie; and you are coming to us, to our home, to get well."

"Home!" he murmured contentedly.

So he was carried to their bungalow, and all that they could do was done to restore him to health once more,—nursing, good food, and, above all, the new joy in his heart did wonders. And they told him of their lost Elva's little life and great faith. And Mabel murmured, "*She* prepared me for this surprise; I saw her pointing down to you here."

And Archie told them of Helen's last days, mourning now over his pride which had kept her separated from her friends; and since her death he had wandered as tutor, agent, and otherwise to earn his living,—but was now almost useless from ill health, and had thought of "trying to get home to die."

"We must write the good news by this mail," cried Mabel joyously.

A flush rose to Archie's face.

"Are you *sure* of my father, Mabel?"

"Yes—as sure as you may be of our FATHER in Heaven forgiving you, Archie," she whispered.

"I *hope* for both," he said, humbly; "I have had very different thoughts and feelings lately, Mabel, and have *bitterly* repented. I think my little sister's prayers were aiding me to see things rightly."

Each day Mabel and her husband gave him loving help to find the way of peace.

"You have dragged me to land at last!" he said gratefully one sultry evening before they sailed for "Home."

* * * * *

On reaching England they stayed one night in London to rest before the excitement of home-coming, which Archie begged might be as quiet and private as possible, preferring to walk through the fields from the station, time unmentioned beforehand, and to meet his father unnoticed in his study. It being a lovely day, they all decided to walk the short distance, and so renewed their acquaintance with old haunts of Archie's childhood.

"Let us turn into the churchyard and look at Elva's grave," pleaded Mabel.

"Is it not too much for you, dear?" urged her husband.

"No, because I shall feel more satisfied to do nothing more to-day."

So they turned into the quiet ground to the spot where a fresh wreath of lilies was decking little Elva's bed. Mabel and her husband knelt beside it, their memories going back to the loving presence of old.

"Is little 'sister Elva' looking at us?" said Mabel's little image, looking up to the blue sky where a tiny silver cloud was floating over their heads.

"I hope so, my precious."

Just at that moment the latch of the gate clicked, they turned and saw their father and Helen coming towards them.

"Ah! surely Elva sees us now!" said Mabel, springing to her father's arms.

"My children, my children! restored at last!" exclaimed Mr. Clayton, all his proud reserve broken and gone as he held a hand of each

—and then silent thankfulness ascended in heartfelt joy by Elva's grave, where the words stood forth on a white cross :

IN LOVING AND GRATEFUL MEMORY OF

ELVA HOWARD.

FELL ASLEEP SEPT. 28TH, 18— AGED 7 YEARS.

“Blessed are the peacemakers.”

A happy group assembled in the drawing-room at Fir Lodge that evening, Helen looking as happy as any, giving news of divers friends and their late doings.

“Since Lady Pailey's death,” Helen continued, “Amy and Robert have been at the Park ; their boy is a fine little fellow, but they both spoil him, I fear.—The doctor is sure to look in to-morrow to give his ‘welcome home,’—he misses his boy very much, but Burton does him so much credit,—he is studying hard now at college. He never forgets Elva, and lays fresh flowers daily on the grave when he is here.—Mrs. Macpherson is quite as ‘managing’ as ever—”

“And matchmaking still,” interposed Mr. Clayton with a sly glance at Helen, who however only gave him a merry and unabashed look in return as he continued, “Helen will *not* see the advantage of moving into the rectory, which Mrs. Mac thinks is in need of a mistress.”

“You know you couldn't spare me, uncle,” she replied, giving him his tea-cup.

“Long may you act upon that,” he said contentedly ; “you have filled Mabel's place better than I thought possible,—she spoiled me so !”

And so, though Mrs. Macpherson could never see the appropriateness of Elva's grave having that inscription, there were these happy, grateful hearts enjoying the fruits of her loving work and softening influence on their lives ; and even “in death they were not divided.”

CINDERELLA.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CINDERELLA.

HER STEP-MOTHER.

ANNA (*Cinderella's Step-sister.*)

KATE " "

A FAIRY.

A YOUNG PRINCE.

GUESTS AT THE BALL.

SCENE I.

A DRESSING-ROOM.

Enter ANNA (exclaiming)

Where is that idle Cinderella !

How often shall I have to tell her

That she must always be at hand ?

(Enter Cinderella.)

CINDERELLA.

Sister, I'm here ; at your command.

ANNA.

Well, come at once, and do my hair,

And bring a dress for me to wear ;

The finest one among them all—

I'm going to the Prince's ball.

KATE (*calling.*)

Here, Cinderella, where are you ?

Help me to dress—now make haste—do.

CINDERELLA.

ANNA.

I called her first, so you must wait ;
If she is quick, we shan't be late.

CINDERELLA.

I'd like to see a ball for once.

KATE.

You at a ball, you silly dunce !
I'm sure you need not think of it ;
To wait on us you're only fit.

ANNA (*laughing.*)

Ha ! ha ! *you* dance ! just think of that !

(*Enter Step-mother.*)

STEP-MOTHER.

Why, child, what are you laughing at ?

CINDERELLA.

They laugh because I'd like to go
To a grand ball ;—just *once* you know !

STEP-MOTHER.

Oh, dear me, that would never do,
I could not think of taking *you* !

CINDERELLA (*pleadingly.*)

It would be such a treat to me !

STEP-MOTHER.

"A treat !" I dare say that might be ;
But still the thing can not be done :
Now go and find my gloves, child,—*run* !
(*Exit Cinderella.*)

And you, my dears, pray do your best
To win the Prince from all the rest.

(*Exeunt all.*)

SCENE II.

Cinderella alone, weeping.

CINDERELLA.

Oh dear ! How very sad am I !

(Enter Fairy.)

FAIRY.

What is the matter ? wherefore cry ?

CINDERELLA.

They leave me every night alone ;—
Now to a lovely ball they're gone.

FAIRY.

And would you also like to go ?

CINDERELLA.

Ah, yes ! But then I can't ; I've no
Fine dress, nor proper things to wear ;
I could not show *these* old rags there !

FAIRY.

I know you're patient, kind, and meek,
So dry these tears upon your cheek ;
I'll help you, child, and we shall see
How angry those proud girls will be
When you appear, as fine as they—
And finer, too, that I'll dare say !
So get me pumpkin, rats, and mice ;
I'll make you happy in a trice ;
But you must leave the ball by *twelve*,
For *then* you'll be your ragged self.

(Exit.)

SCENE III.

THE PRINCE'S BALL-ROOM.

Guests assembled. Enter Cinderella, dressed beautifully.

STEP-MOTHER (*to Anna.*)

Who is that very lovely maid?
She far outshines *you*, I'm afraid!

PRINCE (*to Cinderella.*)

Pray, Lady, will you dance with me?

CINDERELLA.

Indeed I shall most happy be!

PRINCE.

'Twill make me proud and happy quite;
You're Queen of Beauty here to-night.

STEP-MOTHER (*to Kate.*)

The Prince has asked her now to dance,
No doubt she's glad to get *first* chance!
When this is over I expect
One of you two will be the next.

ANNA (*to Kate.*)

Who *is* she, sister? can't you guess?

KATE.

No—but she must be a Princess—
See, what a very lovely dress!
And then such jewels must be worth
The richest dukedom upon earth!

(Clock strikes 12. Cinderella flies, leaving her shoe.)

PRINCE (*taking it up.*)
She's gone! and left her shoe behind!
(*To all.*)

The wearer of this shoe I'll find,
She whom 'twill fit shall be my wife;
None else but she, upon my life!

STEP-MOTHER (*eagerly.*)
My daughter's foot will wear it, Sir!

PRINCE (*trying it on Anna.*)
Indeed? no, 'tis too small for her.

STEP-MOTHER (*eagerly.*)
Try this one then! Now *do* push, Kate! (*aside.*)
Prince, it *will* fit if you will wait!

PRINCE (*trying the shoe on Kate.*)
Ah no, for both 'tis much too small.
'Twill do for none of these at all. (*Trying it on others.*)
Scene closes.

SCENE IV.

Step-mother, Anna and Kate at home. Enter Prince.

PRINCE.
In vain I've hunted far and wide
For her I've chosen for my bride;
Pray have you other daughters here?

STEP-MOTHER.
One too untidy to appear.

PRINCE.

But let me see her, Madam, pray !

STEP-MOTHER (*to Kate.*)

Call her. The Prince must have his way ;
But she can never wear that shoe,
And she is plain, and dirty too.

PRINCE.

My pleasure, still, is to see all.—

(*Enter Cinderella.*)

Ah ! here's my lady of the ball !
Pray, maiden, let me try this shoe. (*It fits.*)
See, it will fit, 'tis easy too !

STEP-MOTHER (*in surprise.*)

But then, the ball ! *she* was not there !

CINDERELLA.

Yes, it was I.

STEP-MOTHER.

Well ! I declare !

But let the mystery be unravelled,
Child, how could *you* be thus apparelled ?

CINDERELLA.

My dress came from a fairy's hand ;
'Twas manufactured by her wand.

FAIRY (*entering.*)

But fairy wand can not impart
A gentle, kind, and loving heart !

PRINCE.

Mine will be full of joy and pride
With Cinderella for my bride.

(*To Fairy.*)

You, Madam, I can ne'er repay—
Through your kind help I'm bless'd to-day.

FAIRY.

You both deserve your happiness,
I wish you joy—but I confess
These unkind sisters must be blam'd.
I hope they're sorry, and ashamed?

ANNA and KATE (*to Cinderella.*)

Sister, we treated you so badly!

CINDERELLA.

Don't say so! I forgive you gladly;
And now in love we'll all agree,
And all past wrongs forgotten be.

PRINCE.

Dear Cinderella, you are right;

(*To audience.*)

And to our wedding I invite
The kind friends I see here to-night.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

A MERCHANT.

SOPHIA, (*his Daughter.*)

BELLA, " "

BEAUTY, " "

PRINCE IN DISGUISE OF A LION.

SCENE I.

A GARDEN.

Beauty, Sophia, and Bella. Beauty goes to a flower-bed.

SOPHIA (*angrily.*)

Beauty! you must not touch our flowers!
There's your own garden—this is ours.

BEAUTY (*gently.*)

I only want to smell the rose
That in your pretty garden grows.

BELLA.

You shall not touch it—get away!
You always try to spoil our play!
(Enter Merchant.)

MERCHANT.

Children, now come and list to me;
I hear that on the stormy sea
I have just lost a precious prize,
A ship full of rich merchandise,

And now must say good-bye to you
And find out if the news be true.

BEAUTY (*embracing him.*)
Father, dear father, comfort take ;
It may be only a mistake !

MERCHANT.
It may be, darling, and if so
Tell me what shall I bring for you ?

SOPHIA.
For me ?

MERCHANT.
Yes.

BELLA. •
Me ?

MERCHANT.
Yes.

BEAUTY.
Me ?

MERCHANT.
Yes, all—
So say on what your choice may fall.

SOPHIA.
Some gold and gems would suit me best,
And I'll be grander than the rest !

BELLA.
And I would silks and laces wear ;
So bring them costly, rich, and rare.

BEAUTY.
I do not think I want such treasure ;
To see you back will be *my* pleasure.

MERCHANT.

My Beauty, like the rest, must choose
Her gift from father !

BEAUTY.

Well,—a rose ;
The fairest one that you can see,
Dear father, bring it home to me.

SOPHIA (*aside.*)

She likes fine things as well as we :
But feigns to be so meek, you see !
(*Exeunt all.*)

SCENE II.

A GARDEN BY BEAST'S PALACE.

Enter Merchant.

MERCHANT.

I fear my ship is lost, and I
Can only one wish gratify. (*Plucks rose.*)

BEAST (*springing at him.*)

Who gave you leave my rose to take ?
Your life shall pay for your mistake !

MERCHANT.

Oh ! spare me, Lion ! 'tis for one
The fairest child beneath the sun !

LION.

I'll spare you if the first live thing,
That greets you, you to me will bring.

MERCHANT.

I promise !

BEAST.

Mind you keep your vow,
Or you shall die !—Yes, take it now.
(*Gives the rose. Exeunt both.*)

SCENE III.

Enter Merchant with rose. Beauty meets him.

MERCHANT.

Oh ! Beauty !! oh, my child ! alas !
That such a thing should come to pass !

BEAUTY.

What is it, father ? do not weep !

MERCHANT.

I've made a vow I cannot keep ;
A vow to give you up, my child,
To a brute monster, fierce and wild !

BEAUTY (*sadly.*)

Alas ! alas !—well, I will go,
You must not break your vow, you know,
Give me the boon I thoughtless craved ;
And if I'm lost, your *honour's* saved !

MERCHANT.

Ah ! Beauty, my best, darling child,
Such misery will drive me wild !
(*Exeunt both.*)

SCENE IV.

Beauty in the Beast's Garden.

BEAUTY.

Well, this is strange, no beast I see !

BEAST (*coming forward.*)

Fair Beauty, will you marry me ? .

BEAUTY (*starting back.*)

Oh, no !—

BEAST.

Then, Beauty, I must die !
Cannot you love me, Beauty ?—*Try !*

BEAUTY.

Ah, no ; from you I pine to go
To my papa, I love him so !—
And now he's very sick, and low.

BEAST.

Go for one day, but I rely
On your return, or I shall die.

BEAUTY.

Thank you, good Lion !—I will stay
No longer than a single day.—
I've spent *three* in this palace fine,
But 'mid its splendors I repine ;
For I can never happy be
Until my father's face I see !

BEAST.

Farewell ! This rose will have the power
To bring you back at any hour,

But if you don't return to-morrow
I think you'll find me dead, from sorrow !

BEAUTY.

You have been *very* kind to me !
Be sure I'll come back speedily.

(*Exit.*)

SCENE V.

Sophia and Bella at home.

SOPHIA.

How proud and vain that child will grow
If the strange Lion treats her so !

BELLA.

Yes, he seems very kind to her ;
I'm sure his home I should prefer !

SOPHIA.

We'll steal her magic rose, and then
She can't get back to him again !
I'll tell the Lion we would rather
Live with him, while she waits on father.

BELLA.

Perhaps the Lion may object,
We'll see. He'll fetch her, I expect,
And when he finds the rose is dead
Her easy luxuries are fled !

SCENE VI.

BEAST'S GARDEN.

Beauty finds the Lion dying.

BEAUTY.

Oh, dear good Lion, do not die !
I could not come before, for I
Had lost the rose, yet I did seek
It diligently all the week !

BEAST.

Ah ! Beauty, I *shall die*, unless
You say you will be mine—

BEAUTY.

Oh, yes !

BEAST (*appearing as a Prince.*)

Now I am *Prince*, and you *Princess* !

(*Enter Fairy and Merchant.*)

FAIRY.

The fairy's spell is from him pass'd,
He is himself again at last !

(*To Merchant.*)

Good sir, your ship is safe in port,
Not in the ocean, as you thought ;—
And Beauty has the crown, her due ;
With wealth, and joy, and lover true,—

(*To audience.*)

Kind friends, I wish the same to *you*.

RED RIDING-HOOD.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

RED RIDING-HOOD'S MOTHER.

RED RIDING-HOOD.

HER GRANDMOTHER.

A WOODMAN.

THE WOLF.

a fairy
SCENE I.

A ROOM IN A COTTAGE.

*Red Riding-Hood and her Mother together, a basket and some
fruit on table.*

MOTHER.

Come here, my child, and help me now to fill
This basket for poor Grandmamma—she's ill ;
And if you like to take it, dear, you may ;
But do not stop nor loiter on the way.

RED RIDING-HOOD.

Poor Grandmamma ! I'm sorry she's not well.

MOTHER.

Yes, so am I.—Now, darling, run and tell
Betty to give you butter, fresh and new,
And she may give some milk and sweet cakes too :
And you must tempt dear Grandmamma to eat
Some of this fruit which is so ripe and sweet.

RED RIDING-HOOD.

RED RIDING-HOOD.

I'm sure she'll find them all so very good—
Now I will run and get my cloak and hood.

(Runs out and soon re-enters, in red cloak, &c.)

MOTHER.

There—take the basket carefully ; and mind,
Don't spill the milk, nor leave the can behind ;
And hasten through the wood, for when 'tis dark
A wolf is heard sometimes to howl and bark !
If you make haste there's time, and plenty, yet ;
So don't forget your mother's bidding, pet.

(Exeunt both.)

SCENE II.

A WOOD.

Enter Red Riding-Hood, with basket, &c.

RED RIDING-HOOD.

I think dear Grandmamma would like some flowers,
There's time enough, it won't be dark for hours !
And if I do stop now to gather some,
I'll make it up by running faster home.

(Enter Wolf.)

WOLF.

Good morrow, little one—Now pray don't fear !
I'm only going to *talk* to you, my dear :
These flowers are very pretty, are they not ?
And will you tell me what is this you've got ?

(Looks in basket.)

RED RIDING-HOOD.

Only some cakes, and milk, and butter, sir,
For Grandmamma ; I'm taking them to her.

WOLF.

Indeed ! I'm sure that's very good and kind ;
Nice new milk ! humph—I'll taste, if you don't mind.

RED RIDING-HOOD.

Oh, no, indeed I cannot give it you !

WOLF.

Well, well, you need not make such a to do !
I will not take what you refuse to give—
But tell me where your Grandmamma does live.

RED RIDING-HOOD.

On the hill yonder—see, it is not far—
You are not wicked as folks say you are !

WOLF.

You see that I am good, and gentle too,
I'm VERY fond of little girls like you ! ! (*licking his lips.*)
In fact, you're just exactly to my *taste* ;
But I must go, indeed I must make haste,
For there's a woodman coming through the wood,
And he would like to kill me—if he could.
Good-bye,—but what's your name ?

RED RIDING-HOOD.

Red Riding-Hood.

(Exit Wolf.)

I'm sure that people do the wolf much wrong ;
But I must go, I fear I've stayed too long !

(Exit.)

SCENE III.

Wolf knocking at Grandmother's door.

GRANDMOTHER (*from within.*)

Who's there?

WOLF.

Red Riding-Hood—make haste,
Pray let me in, for I've no time to waste!

GRANDMOTHER.

"No time to waste!" why, child, what do you mean?
But pull the bobbin, and you'll soon get in;
And tell me what's the cause for all this hurry,
That you should put me into such a flurry!

WOLF.

Only that I am hungry, Grannie dear,
And must this minute eat you up, I fear!

(Eats her.)

Dear me, she's very thin and very tough,
I don't seem to have eaten half enough!
Red Riding-Hood will soon be here, I'll end
My meal with you, my bonny little friend!

(Puts on Grandmother's things and gets into bed.)

(Red Riding-Hood knocks at the door.)

WOLF.

Who is it knocks?

RED RIDING-HOOD.

I, Grandmamma;

I've come to ask you how you are,
And brought you milk and cakes so good,
I am your pet, Red Riding-Hood.

WOLF.

Pull up the latch, and come in here,
I'm *very* glad to see you, dear !
Put down the things on that settee
And jump up on the bed with me.

RED RIDING-HOOD.

Why, dear me ! how your ears have grown !

WOLF.

Better for hearing you, sweet one !

RED RIDING-HOOD.

Your eyes are strange, and bigger too !

WOLF.

The better, darling, to see you !

RED RIDING-HOOD.

Your mouth has grown from ear to ear !

WOLF.

Better to eat you up, my dear !

(As he springs on her the woodman enters.)

WOODMAN.

I thought so ! But don't be so fast—*(killing him)*
I've caught you, Mr. Wolf, at last !
I followed him from yonder wood,
And *just* saved *you*, Red Riding-Hood !
But if you'd done as mother said,
Your Grandmamma had not been dead !

FAST AND FEAST.

I HUNGERED for the Food so sweet,
I longed my LORD and GOD to meet,
By faith to hold Him by the Feet!

But still the holy days went by,
No feast was spread, no blended cry
Of "Glory be to GOD on high!"

When shall it be, dear LORD? I said,
When shall I lay on Thy bowed Head
My sins, and taste the Living Bread?

Then I was called my LORD to meet,
'Neath shining stars, that seemed to greet
My thankful heart with answers sweet.

The summons came in haste that night,
The cloudy day had passed in light
That smiled upon my way so bright.

It led me to a dying bed,
And there the Sacred Feast was spread
For one whose earthly hopes were fled.

The dwelling was so mean and low!
But JESUS once had deigned to know
Such lot in Bethlehem, long ago.

Then with the sufferer and GOD'S Priest
United in the wondrous Feast,
From doubt and want at last released ;

The voice of my Beloved I hear
Again, and feel His Presence near,
And taste again His love so dear !

Then homeward turning, still I hear
A warning voice within, yet clear—
“ Unworthy thou of gifts so dear,

“ Take heed lest once again the word
Come quickly, ‘ Rise and meet thy LORD !’
And thou shouldst miss His great reward !”

O GOD, Who lookest from on high
Upon our frail humanity,
Abide with us eternally.
LORD, clothe us with Thy robe of grace,
Enfold us in Thy dear embrace,
Give us the ring and seal of love
To wear within Thy courts above !

HARVEST HYMN.

TO Thee, O gracious FATHER, now we raise our thankful cry,
We praise Thee for our harvest store, bestowed so plenteously!
For blessings on the seeds of spring, for summer's ripening ray,
And, crowning all, for autumn's sheaves we bless Thy Name to-day.

Thy mighty Love, so full and free, our daily bread bestows,
And oft, alas! on thankless souls Thy tender mercy flows;
We pray Thee let Thy gentle Spirit's softening influence yield
Good seed to Thee within our hearts, Thy fruitful harvest field.

For further blessing still we plead on heathen lands abroad,
For gospel seed there scattered in Thy Name, O SON of GOD;
The whitening fields are waiting for more labourers from our shores,
LORD, raise up willing hearts to spread Thy freely lavished stores!

Our longing hearts are yearning for Thy glorious Harvest Home,
When CHRIST, with angel reapers, shall in clouds of glory come;
And then around Thy Throne of light redeemed souls shall raise,
To FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, eternal thanks and praise.

Amen.

“EVER WITH THE LORD.”

SO never to depart from Thee,
My LORD, what precious words to me !
To see Thy Face, to hear Thy Voice !
In Thee for ever to rejoice ;
JESU, what thrilling words are they
To draw my soul from earth away !
Oh, joy ! to be thus satisfied,
To live with Him Who lived and died
And rose again, to give to me
Such promise for Eternity.

With Thee to spend Eternity ;
To catch the rays that fall from Thee,
And glorified with Thine own light
To shine for ever in Thy sight.
JESU, what thrilling hopes are they
To lift my soul from earth away !
To lose myself in Thee to find
All riches for the heart and mind ;
To know as we are known—to be
For ever, LORD, with Thee, with Thee !

LEICESTER BOUQUET TO W. S.

(AFTER F. R. HAVERGAL.)

As in this world we often see
The better shaded by the worse,
You ask that your sweet family
May find a frame in my poor verse.

THE parent roof-tree heads the song,
Its quiet shelter free to all,
Its gentle care, its love so strong,
Shall shine where'er life's shadows fall.

This looks on fields and course of green,
Types of life's hopes for loved ones fair,
Straight be *their* course through pastures seen,
Through sun and shade may "GOD be there."

Next she who bears the gentle name
Of one whom GOD took—loving her—
She lives rejoicing, for there came
The bliss of true love shielding her
Near home, and 'neath GOD'S house of prayer,
Dear mother Church!—He placed us there.

Far in Canadian fields of toil
The first-born son in exile yearns
To tread again old England's soil
And to the Parent roof-tree turns
In spirit, while they breathe the prayer,
Where'er he roams may "GOD be there."

Another where the dusky earth
Yields wealth of latent light and heat,
Finds pleasure in the hidden worth
Of fields of knowledge 'neath his feet,
In mining darkness or clear air
Of Heaven's light—GOD still is there.

Again in Leicester a bright home,
Where a girl-wife and mother sings—
So lily-like her youthful bloom,
And round her home a sunlight flings.
Her baby boy scarcely more fair
In childlike grace. May CHRIST smile there!

And yet beneath the roof-tree arms
A little child in blessing grows,
Sheltered from ill and earth's alarms,
Her wealth of love around she throws,
The household pet—with name so fair,
Amongst them all may "GOD be there,"
And to His Home beyond earth's mist,
Lead them to dwell with Him in CHRIST!

October, 1888.

HYMN FOR EVENING.

Music by Rev. R. Gould.



Heavenly FATHER, LORD of all,
Ere the power of slumber fall
On our hearts, and thoughts, and ways,
Hear our evening prayer and praise !

JESU, "Bright and Morning Star,"
Shining in the Heavens afar,
Shed Thy rays of holy light
O'er our sleep in Thee this night.

HOLY GHOST, Thou SPIRIT blest,
Giving comfort, peace, and rest,
Hover o'er us, Heavenly Dove,
Shielding us with wings of Love.

LORD, beneath Thy Cross we lay
All our evil done this day,
Thou, Who didst for sin atone,
Pardon, cleanse, and guard Thy own !

Life's long day is waning fast,
In the grave it sinks at last ;
JESU, SAVIOUR, let us be,
Sleeping, waking, still with Thee !

Thou shalt gild the Morning skies,
Bidding those who love Thee, " rise !"
Oh may we, on Heaven's bright shore,
Praise and love Thee evermore !

Amen.





1

2

3

4

Stanford University Libraries



3 6105 002 374 424

DATE DUE

DATE DUE			

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004

